

# THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

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## THE WAY OF THE PANTHER.

BY DENNY C. STOKES.

### I.

I WAS in my room again, in my house by the moorland edge, standing with my back to a merry fire; contentedly I watched Mrs. Barnes setting supper upon the table. I watched the light of the familiar oil lamp shift the shadows about the curtained windows, and gladly I saw the firelight skirmish over the two easy chairs which stood one on either side of me—I had forgotten the waiting crowds of the morning, forgotten the thrill that had swayed that crowd when the coughing of maroons had declared the war to be at an end.

I had fled from the vibrating cheers and flashing flags to Colne, to the moorland, to the peace, to the strange peace which, being an old man, I had feared I would not see again.

I felt I must say something to Mrs. Barnes.

'Glorious news, Mrs. Barnes—peace at last.' It was a commonplace remark, cold and affected.

The woman put down her tray and looked me in the face.

'Come, zur, but come too late.'

'Too late, but——'

'Harry, zur. Two days gone.'

Her mouth trembled, her eyes filled quickly, and she turned and fled from the room. I could hear her sobbing in the hall and hear the grumble of old Barnes' voice trying to cheer his wife. I sat down in one of the easy chairs. My eyes looked at the other opposite me, and in an instant I was on my feet.

'Shendaw!'

The name of my nephew burst from my lips. What of him? Would it be too late for him? Had he fallen in the hazards of that hungry thing called war?

My question went unanswered from day to day, and I waited dumb and sad, roaming my house in the light hours, sitting

by the fire far into the nights. Wearily I seemed to count the long days as they grew to weeks; slowly, drearily, they went. Two weeks passed, and then one evening towards the end of November I heard the rattle of the garden gate and footsteps coming to the house, and a few minutes later the second chair was filled. Shendaw was there, looking at me with his dark eyes, and I at him. And in those minutes I think we saw the strength of that affection which was for each other, nephew for uncle, uncle for nephew.

Shendaw spoke slowly:

'Bit.'

'Yes.'

'It's over.'

'Thank God!'

'It's over.' That is all we said that night.

For some weeks after his return Shendaw said nothing of his life in France. I asked him nothing, because I knew that what I had imagined during the years of war he had experienced.

I slipped back into my old life, content, too content to think of Shendaw's future, just glad beyond measure that he was back in the village of Colne, and free to wander by the stone steps of the Dart. Free to go over the open moor, visiting the lonely tors, to follow the winding paths dead across to Skir-ford and Royal Hill. Free to watch the wind curl the manes of pert-eyed ponies and to tread near the green of watchful mires that waited for whatsoever blundered into their clutch. I hoped the moorland would heal the mental wounds which the havoc of war had inflicted on my nephew's mind—but it did not. He remained restless, and only occasionally did I see glimpses of the care-free boy I had once known; more often I sadly watched an uneasy man; and after several weeks he left Colne to try and find an occupation, for he said only that would cure those memories which came to castigate his mind.

Five months he was away, and during that time I wrote to my cousin Maclean in India, and asked him if he wanted anyone to assist him with his estates. I pointed out the chief characteristics of Shendaw, and impressed upon Maclean that he must be getting on in years and ought to be glad to have a younger man with him in the Kappu. My cousin replied at once, saying he would be delighted if Shendaw came out before the rains began; also mentioning a reasonable salary for the boy, and informing me that, as he had no relations to his liking, he hoped to find Shendaw the sort of man he could regard as his heir. I did not

expect so much from Maclean, although I knew him well. I had in my young days planted south of Kadur in the Nilgires and had often visited him. I wrote back offering to invest what I could in his estate, Hiboor, if Shendaw agreed to go. It was at least a fair thing to do, considering that Shendaw was my nephew, and in my regard almost my son. Armed with Maclean's letter, I awaited Shendaw's return. At least I had something to offer him.

Shendaw came back.

'Bit,' he said, 'I can find nothing. People don't want the tired stuff that has served so well to roll back Jerry—can you suggest anything?' His voice was bitter though his eyes were laughing.

I told him then with difficulty about Maclean and the Kappu valley, the life there, the work, the singing Llabadis, the spotted deer and the cool shadows—and when I had finished his eyes were sparkling, and quietly he said 'I'll go.'

Three weeks later Shendaw sailed. That was six—or is it seven, or more?—years ago. He wrote regularly for a while, and then no letters came.

He had forgotten me. The Kappu valley had absorbed him. I confess more than once I feared it would. But through all these years I have heard of Shendaw and of the valley he now calls his own. Kantapa Moya, the pedlar, has faithfully told Rao Mhan all that he has seen, and the old post-master of Konpa has written it down and sent it to me. Time after time I have read the letters, but not until the other day did I take the pith from each one and change Rao Mhan's stilted phrases into a long account. I did it for Jessop.

Jessop came into my life for a short time after Shendaw went away. And then he, too, left me, and I thought had forgotten me until a letter came from him. And to my stupefaction I saw it had been written in India, in Kadur, in the Kappu valley. The postscript of that letter told me more than the seven sheets which preceded it. It said:

'The road which I am building has reached a point five miles from Nasimpura going west. At Konpa it will turn south to go up the Kappu valley, which was surveyed by my predecessor some years ago.

'I rode half-way up the valley yesterday and saw several empty bungalows among the trees above the present earth track. They looked as if they had been deserted for years. The whole place

was dead and utterly silent, but I suppose some people would find an appeal in what might be called its wild beauty. I have not seen a European for months.'

It was strange to hear that Jessop was driving a road through the jungle hills of Kadur.

I sat down and wrote to Jessop and told him about Shendaw. I hope my letter has prepared him to meet Shendaw. Shendaw will resist the coming of the road in some crude way as it mounts the valley which he calls his. I know Jessop can be stubborn. But stubbornness will avail him nothing against the cunning which Shendaw has learnt from the shikaris and stolen from the serene jungle lands. I am wondering now if they have met, and if I shall soon hear of it from one or the other.

Perhaps Rao Mhan will tell me as he has told me of the six—or is it seven?—years Shendaw has spent at Hiboor—Shendaw at Hiboor. With the help of the post-master's letters, I can see it all plainly, and now that Jessop is there I want to know the end.

What is the end? Idly I am reading what I wrote to Jessop to fill one of those lonely hours that I, as an old man, have learnt to dread. Maclean is saying: 'Six years—it's quite time you went back to Bit—to Bit—'

## II.

MACLEAN dropped the book he had been reading on to his knee and took his pipe out of his mouth. He looked over the veranda rail to the pink light of sundown that was spreading over the Kappu valley. He shifted in his chair and turned his head towards Shendaw where he sat lazily in his long chair, his legs stretched to their full length, his booted feet crossed on the bamboo matting. The boy's eyes were half closed, his head rested against the chair back. He was dozing.

'You know, Shendaw, you have been out here nearly six years.'

'Yes, six years about Christmas; the time has gone pretty rapidly—six years.'

'Will you go home this year for six months? You know I have got a berth for the middle of April—that is to say, in seven days' time.'

'No.' Shendaw opened his eyes and turned his head towards Maclean. 'No, Maclean, I won't go. I am quite fit, and there is more than enough to do. It has not seemed like six years; it has



gone quickly—if I left I should not be going home ; I should be leaving—home. It may sound curious, but that is true ; I should be leaving all I liked, all for which I have a fondness—I will admit my attachment to the Kappu has become intense, I—I do not quite understand, I cannot explain, but the Kappu is—is, yes, it is home.’

Maclean was struck by the earnestness of Shendaw’s voice. The boy’s face did not betray his feelings, but his voice—it rang low with sincerity. Maclean thought he detected a tremor of passion. But he was not sure.

‘What about Bit ? He would be glad to see you—he said in his last letter he hoped you would be coming home soon.’

‘Bit,’ murmured Shendaw, ‘Bit—yes, I should like to see him, but I cannot go.’ Shendaw’s eyes became suddenly sad. He shifted uneasily in his chair. Maclean tried to look into the boy’s eyes, but they did not meet his.

‘It’s quite time you went. Six years is too long. You seem to have got a stubborn affection for this valley—now will you go ?’

‘No, not unless you sack me.’ Shendaw’s answer was final. Maclean settled himself back in his chair. It had been the same every year. Shendaw had always refused home leave. He would not go. Maclean lit his pipe and took up his book and continued to read.

Shendaw smiled as he looked out over the Kappu at the crude, wild elegance of the valley that he had come to like so well. Six years—it was a long time, but each year had merged into the one following as easily as the pink light of sundown melted into the blue of night, as peacefully as the yellow of dawn topped the hills to dispel the ghouliah shades from the jungle mass. They had all been the same, the six years, and yet as Shendaw lay back in his chair breathing the coolness of an April evening, he realised that he was content, very content, to remain in the Hiboor bungalow overlooking the sleeping jungle hills. They were always sleeping ; they had slept since the last of Tippu Sultan’s marauders passed through the Kappu on their way south and east to meet the English.

Yes, he was content. In every year had come the pleasant cool of the Christmas weeks and the weighing of the last bushels of red cherry into the rattling pulpers. And then the last white coffee beans had been sacked from the long drying tables and loaded into the clumsy two-wheeled carts for the coast. The long convoys had rumbled down the road from the Hiboor bungalow through the early shades of night, to the bridge over the Kappu River. They had

mounted the dusty hill on Turner's side of the valley, with lanterns swinging and the white humped bulls snorting as they lurched against their yokes, to disappear in the first shadowed miles of road that led through Konpa bazaar—and then on over the ghats down to the sea at Mangalore.

And when the last cart had gone the watchman's half-hour bell had ceased to clang through the trees, and soon after came the grumble of thunder, and then came the showers of April that brought out the blossom in a few hours of night to weigh down the coffee trees under a dense white canopy, filling the air with a pungent scent, covering the dull hillside fields as if with a sudden fall of snow. And then had come the din of wild carousals when the coolies danced through the night at their puja feasts to the throbbing beat of tom-toms—and then the glare and heat of May.

In every year had come the hiss of monsoon rains to endure for twelve louring weeks while the berries formed on the coffee wood, turning from green to red, so that when the pruning knives were returned to store, the new crop hung ready for the hands of coolie gangs.

'You have not found it dull, my boy—not dull?' Maclean's powerful voice broke upon the stillness of the veranda.

'Not in the least.' Shendaw smiled at the elder man. His liking for Maclean had grown month by month; the red, round face, the clear grey eyes, and the tubby body. They were very familiar—they were part of the Kappu.

'What are you smiling at, Shendaw? At me, I suppose. Well, I get older every day, and fatter. The fellows have always called me 'tubby Maclean'; they will soon call me 'old Maclean.' You will have to do the pushing from now onwards. I get tired so easily. But tell me, what has attracted you out here? Something has fascinated you. At times you are quite fanatical—few men are fascinated by the jungles, but you—you revel in them; sometimes it seems as if the very blood of the place is flowing in your veins. You say you can't understand why the Kappu holds you. It has gripped you, my boy—but why?'

'I don't know—I don't quite know what it is.'

Shendaw had scrambled out of his chair and was standing, with his hands in his khaki shorts, against the veranda rail. Maclean looked at his broad back and thick-set lithe, legs. He had often admired Shendaw's well-proportioned head and shoulders. He had a fine face; it was always full of life, and although the dark eyes were

generally twinkling, they had a way of becoming suddenly serious; but this curious light never remained for long—it would go as quickly as it came and leave the boy's eyes sparkling, gay, almost careless in expression. Shendaw's dark hair was a strange contrast to his uniformly pallid skin. The pallor was not unhealthy, but it seemed accentuated by the crowning mop of straight black hair. But it was the boy's eyes that attracted Maclean: they laughed, and yet sometimes their merriment seemed to hide something, something that Maclean could never understand—sometimes he wondered if he were a fool to imagine that Shendaw had anything to hide; there was nothing for the boy to hide—nothing—at least he could think of nothing—.

Maclean shrugged his shoulders and smiled at the futility of his thoughts. He closed his book.

'You know,' he began, 'I have seen men come into these hills, all sorts of men. Some of them have felt smothered—like Jason at Awesha; a few have told me that the jungles gave them a feeling—they felt as if they were being sheltered—but no man have I seen drawn to the Kappu like you are. Perhaps Turner—old Turner—is the exception. Most of these men have been like Jason—uneasy—smothered.

'That poor boy, as you know, is a pretty good scholar, but he can't understand the Kappu. He despises the estate. He loathed coming here at his father's death; he is trying to sell Awesha. I may buy it. You can see he is living under a strain. He even hates the casuarina leaves rustling over his bungalow. I have seen him start when the blue verbena blooms tap against his veranda rail. He says the caprices of the elements are always threatening him—he is weak. But you like the place. It has gone deep into you—why?' Maclean watched Shendaw. He was standing still. He did not turn round—he did not move.

He was looking out on the tranquillity of the Kappu; he was smiling. He knew that he was fascinated by the serenity of the jungle hills, by the warm languorous breaths that whispered over the dyked flats of the paddy fields where they carpeted the valley bed and cut into the tree-covered hills like placid backwaters into a rugged coast. He liked to know there were shy beasts moving through the banks of thruna grass and through the deep shadows that were sometimes black and sometimes blue, but which were never still.

The rumble of a tiger's call often sent the blood pounding through

his veins when he heard it drifting through the night. The snort of pig, the rustle of the spear-shaped eucalyptus leaves, the moans of dying monkeys in the rains, the Gowdas' cattle cries, and the scuffle of spotted land-crabs engaged in mortal fight under heaped and rotting leaves—it all held him in a trance. There was peace in the remote Kurumba villages, and whenever a leaden mood settled on him he had sent for Nunu, the young shikari, and they had spent days together, shooting. The Kappu had ousted the memory of France: he no longer heard the muttering thud of guns—perhaps that was why the valley held him a slave, a willing subject of its wildness—it had ousted the memories of France; but if he told Maclean that he would laugh. Maclean had never seen France in war and the sodden, naked beastliness; the Kappu was at peace; it was wild—rudely wild and simple—but it was at peace. It would be no good to attempt an explanation—no, Maclean would not understand.

'I don't think I can explain.' Shendaw turned suddenly and faced Maclean. 'The Kappu has not cowed me as it has Jason. And as for Tibberd over the other side, I know he hates the valley too, in his sullen, morose way.'

Maclean relit his pipe. 'Well, you know,' he began, 'Tibberd is a queer beggar. He came into this valley and salvaged Dreekhkan. It was a derelict estate when he bought. He has had a fight. He has won, but it has left him hard. The Kei-sahib—he has won through by sheer stubborn effort, he has never spared himself or the natives. So different from old Turner. Turner came in with me; though a younger man than I, he has grown tired. Sisonoo is going to waste; while he has been pruning his rose trees the coolies have been sleeping, and weeds are choking most of his acres. Long sinuous tongues of creeper are slithering out from the jungle and claiming their own. It's a pity. Thank heavens, I am still keen to add more acres to Hiboor. Opening up the jungle, instead of letting it come back.'

'Yes, the jungle does claim its own.' Shendaw's tone was serious. Maclean looked up sharply, but his companion had turned his face away. For several minutes they were silent. The evening was very still. Only the wall lizards broke the silence with their impious chuck-a-pucks.

It was Maclean who was the first to talk again. 'Did Bit ever tell you he had a son?'

Shendaw swung round in surprise.

'No, never. I did not know he was married.'

'He was not. The son was by a Llambadi girl. You know Bit's estate was a good way south of here, but he often came up to visit me. He never told me about that son. I have never told him that I have heard. Old Kantapa the pedlar told me. Apparently Bit wanted to send the boy to school. The Llambadi mother heard of this and bolted with the boy—that saved Bit a lot of trouble—poor old Bit! It was a mistake. It must have worried him. You know Turner's daughter is coming with the man she is going to marry to Sisonoo in September, just for a few days before Turner leaves the Kappu.'

'Leaves the Kappu?' There was astonishment in Shendaw's voice as he once again turned towards the elder man.

'I thought you would be surprised.' Maclean laughed. 'Yesterday,' he added, 'I bought Sisonoo. Turner wants to stay until after the monsoon. He is beginning to dread leaving. Poor old Turner!'

Maclean looked across the valley, through the feathery leaves of a clump of blue gums growing in the garden, to where the Sisonoo bungalow broke its white walls through a waving sea of silver oaks.

'Yes, I am surprised. I thought he would want to stay here now that he has been so long in the valley.'

'He does,' replied Maclean, 'but Marjorie wants him at home near her. I have not seen her since she left. She was eight then. How the years have gone! Now, Shendaw, will you take this berth and go home?'

'No.'

'Well, I will. I will go home and see Bit. I should have suggested our both going, but one of us must be here. Edwards is coming up after the rains.'

'Edwards?'

'Yes, Edwards, the tall, lanky fellow who came up here last year to beat. He said then he thought there was copper in the valley. He is coming up again.'

'Why?' Shendaw's voice was low; it trembled.

He was still looking at the garden over which the evening lights were creeping. In the pulsating hush many scents were floating, crude yet sweet scents of the jungle hills. He could hear a sound, a soothing sound, that he always heard at this hour when day slipped into night. It was like the tang of vina strings plucked

by some delicate unseen hand, hidden in the lantana bushes below the bungalow. He wondered if the Llambadi girl heard it as she watered the few parched plants in the gardens. She always sang as the sun dropped to the hills. She crooned gipsy songs of a peculiarly stirring lilt, songs of her caste folk, songs of the roads and paths that twisted beneath the crooked trunks of basri trees.

Once he had asked her if she heard the sound of vina strings. She had said 'No, Sahib, I hear only the hum of bees,' and he had felt foolish when her big brown eyes smiled for a moment into his. She had beautiful eyes. Shendaw had often admired Sunu's large liquid eyes.

'Why?' Maclean's voice resounded through the veranda. 'Why, to investigate, to find copper, to wake up the Kappu. Think, my boy, what it would mean if copper were found. A thriving valley, Konpa twice or three times its present size and a decent European community. Indeed, the Kappu would be shaken out of its present sleep. Of course the change would come slowly.'

Shendaw sank down into a chair. His hands held his head. When he commenced to speak his voice was low, very low and dry. It made Maclean look at him intently with a puzzled expression on his face.

'Yes,' said Shendaw, 'the change would come slowly. It will grow like the bazaars round the Calcutta mills, pressing and spreading up and down the Kappu, bringing ugly tempers, squalor, and discontent. It will be, if it comes, a pernicious growth, a festering sore. The Gowdas will move away before a herd of newcomers. A scum will collect in brick barracks where now there are grass villages. In place of the simple primitive beauty of this valley will come the muck and bilge of bazaars to smother and to destroy. No, mines will not change the Kappu, they will destroy it. Why not continue to open up your jungles and plant? Leave mines alone. Stop Edwards coming.'

Maclean tried to laugh, but he could not. Shendaw was in earnest. His voice had been intense and shaking with emotion.

Shendaw had suddenly ceased to speak. He moved close to Maclean.

'I am sorry for that outburst; at the same time I hope you will never allow mines to come into the Kappu—they would be alien to the valley, they would cross the natural tempers that are here between Hisson's ridge and Kodi-Kundi. You know well enough that the tempers of the Kappu are peculiar, they make themselves



felt, they have to be wooed ; Tibberd has never wooed them, he has fought them, and won, you say. But I am not certain. I have a feeling he will not win in the long run—but keep the mines out, Maclean—keep the Kappu clean ; it may be sleeping, it may be primitive, but in its crude way it is clean—cleaner than the cities and bazaars.' For a minute fire played in Shendaw's eyes. Curious red lights came and went in them and made them glow. The flitting gleams disappeared, and then the normal twinkle came back and the boy's breath seemed to ease.

'I believe you advocate picturesque stagnation for the sake of the picturesque,' said Maclean at length.

'No, no, I don't. I may be unusually attracted to the picturesque, but stagnation, no. There is no stagnation in the Kappu. I am afraid of your projected mines : they would be a poison, Maclean, a poison injected, and it would destroy. Nothing could retrieve the valley once mines came except——' Shendaw's voice trailed off into a whisper.

'Except what ?' Maclean was watching his companion's face eagerly. The elder man was no longer perplexed. He was disturbed, anxious, and afraid of Shendaw's earnestness.

'Except a jungle fire. Yes, a fire, sweeping out of the Mhatu. That would scour the Kappu and lick up—lick up the mines.'

They fell silent. Shendaw sat wearily down in a long chair and Maclean lay back in his, wondering what to say and wishing that his assistant would go home on leave. Six years—it had been too long.

The night was quiet. Only the noise of bearded spiders humming to their dainty mates disturbed the stillness. Outside was the blue darkness of the valley, still, deep, serene. An hour passed before Maclean spoke.

'Shendaw, the tsusu flower has gripped you. Turner told me he thought it had—it has. You, like a bee, have alighted on its alluring spear-shaped petals ; they are breathing out their poison from hidden glands, and if you are not careful the long petals will curl up, trap you, and a hundred minute suckers will bleed you dry, and then your skeleton will be vomited on to the dust for the land-crabs to consume.'

Shendaw laughed heartily at the simile.

'Not so bad, Maclean,' he said. 'Not so bad—in fact, quite pretty. Now tell me, when was Bit's son born ?'

'I don't quite know ; twenty, perhaps five-and-twenty years



ago—why?’ Maclean noticed that the merriment had left Shendaw’s eyes. They had contracted and had become cold.

‘I was wondering if—perhaps—no, it was merely a wild idea of mine.’

‘What do you mean?’ Maclean’s voice was anxious.

‘Nothing, only an idiotic idea struck me. It’s best forgotten.’ Shendaw shivered.

‘Well, I’m going to bed; good night.’ The elder man got up, and as he passed into the bungalow he tapped his assistant on the shoulder.

‘Don’t dream too much—remember the tsusu flower and the fate it deals out. Good night.’

Shendaw sat alone listening to the lizards on the wall. The scent of bruised fuchsia was in the air. The moon was high and playing on the shivering thruna grass, lighting the whole valley from Hisson’s ridge to Kodi-Kundi, lighting the slumbering jungle hills where they stretched from the Kappu westward to the bare Ghats above Malabar, and from Hiboor eastward to the grass waste round the houses of Nasimpura, twenty miles away.

The wail of a jackal drifted across the paddy-fields below where the gloom of night hung its shifting veil; the echoes answered the wavering call.

A gourd drum throbbed monotonously in the coolie lines, and then came silence—a silence that was the hidden pulse of many things—a throbbing, tremulous beat of sound stirring through the night.

‘I wonder,’ mumbled Shendaw, ‘if—no, it’s impossible, quite impossible.’ He shivered.

And later as he left his chair he heard the mutter of thunder from somewhere far beyond Hisson’s ridge.

### III.

NEXT morning, three hours after the sun had filled the valley with its yellow light, Maclean and Shendaw rode down the road from the Hiboor bungalow. They passed slowly through the coolie lines, where preparations were being made for the feast which year after year preceded the exodus of the coolies from the estate lines to their coast villages, ninety miles away among the paddy flats of Canara. Bamboo arches hung with leaves and grass had already risen across the narrow alleys between the low mud walls of the squat huts. On an open space near the river-bank stalls were growing

up round a circle, on which a score of Mhuns pounded the earth of the dancing ground. They were young men, lean, clothed in skimpy dhotis. They worked rapidly, their muscles rippling in the sun as they lifted and dropped the heavy pounders. They were eager to finish their task so that they could join the other men who were idling among the rising stalls. Already card-twisters were reaping a harvest from the coolies, while sellers of sweetmeats cleared pariah dogs away from their covered wares and fortune-tellers hastened to paint grinning devils on their curtained stalls, so that they could glean some of the coolies' earnings before quick-handed Chettys filled their purses, and before too many annas were lost upon the backs of blood-soaked fighting cocks.

As the planters left the lines where the scent of sour ghi mingled with that of soogee pulp and rotting garbage, two police peons rose and salaamed, then sank down again in the shade of a bamboo clump. Maclean whisked at the flies that swarmed about his pony's head. Shendaw watched the cattle grazing upon the baked slopes of Kodi-Kundi across the river, where grunia shrubs showed yellow for the want of rain. Below the browned pasturage the river and road swerved eastwards towards Nasimpura; beyond, dark walls of jungle-growth rose one upon the other. Maclean was the first to break the silence.

'Yesterday you said that mines would ruin the Kappu. I think I see what you mean—that is, you admire the valley as it is, a slumbering backwater of older India, where the primitive is the ideal, or at least where the primitive satisfies the natives of these parts. That is all very well in its way, but you can't be successful if, in these days, you devote your time to conserving the picturesque and the archaic simplicity of a place in order to humour your own sensitive temper. No, my boy, it is pleasant to admire the careless harmony of this valley, but if to retain its placid beauty it means smothering progress—well, the beauty must suffer and progress be made. But I think you have made up your mind that mines will immediately destroy the Kappu. Mines would not, no, not even ultimately would they derange the Kappu. The beginnings would be small, the change would come naturally. I have lived long enough here in the jungles to know that one must woo the tempers of the jungles, and that it is useless to override the susceptibilities of the place and people. One must even bow to the enforcement of local lore by the simple caste-men of the vicinity.

'And, my boy, that is where you can help me. You have got

very near the heart of the place. When, in the future, I make suggestions, plans, you must tell me by what means they can be carried out without disturbing the natives unduly. Their beliefs are often idiotic from our point of view, but that is of little account: they have certain beliefs and we must try and use them and not abuse them—I have no wish to get Tibberd's reputation. In his determination to get things done he has overlooked the feelings of the natives. He has jeered at their simple beliefs, with the result, my boy, I think, that the jungles are jeering at him, and he knows sooner or later he will lose. You are Tibberd's opposite—you would be if I did not laugh at you sometimes. You like to hear naïve men tell you peculiar stories. I know that, because sometimes when the mood is upon you, you tell me some of the tales you hear. You tell them eagerly and earnestly. All I say is, these stories are all right as a hobby, but to make them your work—no. At the same time I don't want to get Tibberd's reputation. According to the Kharitas he has sent a dozen devils wandering angry and homeless through the jungles. They are said to be plaguing all and sundry because no one has avenged them. Only last year Tibberd put a pad of gun-cotton under a stone and blew it to dust—that was when he made the new road to Hisson's ridge. That stone sheltered the particular and peculiar devil who preys upon the first-born. Having been rudely disturbed he is at large, and old Krishna Gowda told me twenty first-borns have died in the last three months hereabouts. The noise of that exploded gun-cotton finds echo in the sullen mutterings of the Kharitas and Gowdas up and down the valley. Tibberd is hated, and yet he has been successful. Dreel Khan is the finest estate in the Kappu.'

'I don't call Tibberd exactly successful,' said Shendaw. 'Dreel Khan is a sound estate, but Tibberd has to face sullen resentment every minute of his life; he is always uneasy—not afraid, like Jason, but he has no peace. It is one continual fight. He has to drive everybody if he wants things done. I believe the valley will always take toll of those who interfere with it. One way or the other it resents interference.'

Maclean turned and looked at Shendaw. 'You really think so, my boy?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'And I will admit that I do too—it's curious, damned curious, and, I think, cannot be explained. Perhaps the Kappu will resent the mines if they come. What do you say?'

'I sincerely believe the valley will in some crude way resist them.'

'How?'

'Yesterday I suggested fire would be the only thing that would successfully destroy the mines and the mine-workers.'

'I believe you will set that fire going, Shendaw.'

The two men laughed, and turning their ponies off the lower road trotted up a winding path leading through a strip of jungle. They rode for some minutes through heavy shadow; above them were the interlocked branches of the giant trees which bordered the path. No sunlight penetrated the mass of leaves. The coarse-barked trunks were festooned with green creepers and swathed in binder plants which formed thick walls of heavy foliage imprisoning the fetid scent of rotting undergrowth. It was stifling in this tree-sheltered corridor. Nothing moved, nothing—except hordes of leeches waving their sucker heads towards the ponies' feet. Suddenly they emerged under the orderly rows of silver oaks that shaded the young coffee on the ridge of Debarakhan block. The ponies walked as they descended the eastern face of the hill along a twisting path. Coffee outgrowth brushed the knees of the riders as they swayed to the faltering pace of their mounts. Turning off the loose surface of the path they pushed through a fringe of tall grass specked with red huti bloom, and stopped on the edge of a large clearing. Below them they could see a deep valley and blue hills beyond.

'There,' said Maclean, pointing to a black mass of jungle, 'is Mhatu, the home of the small red-haired people.'

'Surely,' laughed Shendaw, 'you don't believe in them?'

'I don't, but the natives do,' returned the elder man. 'I've told Tibberd that if he does not laugh more, they will come and take him into Mhatu and dance on his stomach until he does laugh from sheer agony of the process. He who shudders at a child's laugh, he who counts his money instead of watching the beauty of the sunset, he who spits upon a flower, will be taken by the crooked children of the Mhatu.'

'That,' said Shendaw, 'is the first time I have heard you talk of the Mhatu dwarfs. Not a few minutes ago you said we must woo the temper of the jungles. Well, before you get back the coolies will have started work again. I suggest we do not drive this clearing any farther south along this hill. It would be better to take the gangs over to Jason's side and clear between Debarakhan

and Awesha. If we go south we shall touch the jungle called Hulimanni, and if that is disturbed it means trouble.'

'Why?' questioned Maclean.

'Well, I only heard this from young Nunu yesterday when I was here. You see, I was riding by Nunu's house when for the first time I saw a broken knife nailed above the doorway. I asked why it was there, and I was told that Budu, Nunu's brother, had broken a law of the shikaris by entering Hulimanni. It is a sanctuary for wounded beasts. It has hidden somewhere in its depths cooling fountains which heal wounds. But once an animal takes refuge there it may not re-enter the jungles to hunt again. Shikaris are forbidden to enter: they must recognise it as a sanctuary. But Budu was mad with anger when he went in. You see, a panther killed his father while the old man slept. That was a crime. Budu hung to the trail of that panther for five days, and in desperation the beast went into Hulimanni. It was unwounded. Budu followed. Next day someone found the shikari and the panther lying side by side on the fringes of that jungle. The guardian had punished the beast for seeking safety when unwounded, and had punished the shikari for entering where no man must go. Nunu burnt them together, and legend says they are now somewhere where there is no sanctuary, hunting one another eternally.

'So, if we disturb this devil's garden we may be punished. This is what would happen—the beasts would move into the Mhatu jungle, and turn out the hairy dwarfs. These crooked children would come, I suppose, and dance on our stomachs until we died.'

Maclean smiled as he turned his pony back on to the path.

'I will agree,' he said. 'We will leave Hulimanni alone.'

'I believe, Maclean, you are really afraid of the people of Mhatu,' laughed Shendaw. 'You fear these hairy ones.'

'I am not anxious to get a reputation like Tibberd's,' retorted Maclean, a smile still on his round face. 'I don't wish to be accused of turning the Mhatu dwarfs out of their invisible villages. I will stick to what I have said. I will try and woo the jungles, and in leaving Hulimanni alone I will commence my courting of local lore.'

'But what about the mines? Supposing Edwards finds copper under Hulimanni?'

'I hope he won't.'

'Then I am right,' declared Shendaw. 'You have often laughed

at me when I have told you what you call queer tales of childish people, and now you say you hope Edwards won't find copper in that sanctuary—yes, I am right, you are afraid of the fictitious Mhatu dwarfs.'

Maclean took no notice of the jibe. He dug his heels into his pony's sides and set a quick pace down the winding path through the quiet shaded fields of coffee. It was long after midday when the planters left the Debarakhan nurseries and took the river road back towards Hiboor.

'It's hot, Shendaw. We might as well ride slowly. We're late and there's no harm in being later. High tea is as good as lunch. Fine lot of young plants we've seen. That completes the nurseries. And now—let's see—I've got four—no, five days before my boat sails. I'll start the day after to-morrow. I suppose by what I've said from time to time you realise the estates will be yours when I die. You'll have a good acreage.'

'I don't quite see why.'

'I imagine,' interrupted Maclean, 'you are going to say you don't see why I am leaving them to you. Well, because there is no one else to leave them to. But I'm not dead yet. You're still the assistant. So treat Edwards well when he comes to wake up the Kappu, and—don't pay too much attention to Nunu's stories, but just enough to make things work smoothly, you see—'

'What's that down there?' interrupted Shendaw excitedly, pointing to the right of the road. They had reached the bottom of the hill which led up to the Hiboor bungalow. A clump of blue gums that stood in the garden was visible from where they reined in their ponies. To the left was the crumbling side of the hill on which rested the bungalow. It rose abruptly from the road, bare, the red soil cracked by the sun and rutted with rain wash. Between them and the river stood an acre of derelict coffee trees, and towards these rakish plants Shendaw pointed.

'Ants,' said Maclean, as he dismounted.

Shendaw followed. They went to within four yards of two great shadowy carpets that moved slowly towards each other.

'Millions of them,' murmured Maclean, 'millions; small black white-eyed Kannus and—I can't see what the other lot is.'

Shendaw moved a pace nearer and peered at the second army.

'Red,' he said, as he drew back from the hissing mass. 'Red Nalku-bayis.'

The planters watched the rival armies meet in a curling wave



of struggling bodies. It piled and tumbled, fell, rose again and flowed back upon the masses which pressed from the rear, eager to join the bloody fight. Slowly the hill of ants grew in size, now showing black, now showing red, a vicious hiss rising from the thousands of battling warriors as they plied their jaws.

Suddenly the stronger red wave poured over the weakening black army. Inch by inch the black ants gave ground.

'Let's give the black army a hand,' suggested Maclean, and they picked up stones and hurled them into the red mass. Again and again they cut long rifts in the shifting carpet, crushing thousands with every stone. Gradually the pressure of the reds eased and the black army regained ground.

'About evenly matched now. What about tea?' Maclean backed out of the trees, dripping with sweat, and Shendaw followed him to the ponies.

'I noticed, my boy,' said Maclean, as they rode back to the bungalow, 'that you did not hesitate to interfere with those ants. They are part of the Kappu, are they not? Surely it was a dangerous thing to do, as likely to lead to trouble as trespassing in Hulimanni. What do you say?'

Shendaw smiled, but said nothing as they continued up the road to Hiboor.

'You will hear,' said Maclean, 'from Edwards soon after the monsoon. I don't quite know how long he will stay here—about six weeks I should think. I very much doubt if he will be here when I get back.'

'Can I persuade you to tell Edwards not to come?'

Shendaw's voice was low, very low, and shaking slightly, but Maclean did not notice the tremor in his tone.

'Don't worry, my boy, don't worry. Mines won't make much difference to the internal moods of the Kappu and very little to the external aspect, very little indeed, but the value of the estates will increase by leaps and bounds. I have wild dreams of being quite wealthy before I die. Gives me a delightful feeling.'

The cool hours of evening slipped into night. As the men sat on their veranda they could hear the stir of the coolie lines below. Drums throbbed spasmodically, bursts of song drifted through the air and set drowsy monkeys chattering where they were gathered in neighbouring trees. The plaintive yowls of pariah dogs mocked the jackals away on Kоди-Kundi, and then sound after sound faded into a silence which swept suddenly over the valley. . . .



An hour before dawn Shendaw woke to find his bearer shaking him by the shoulder. He was trembling, and his brown face had turned a sickly yellow.

'Sahib, sahib, please quick, please quick! Sahib Maclean very sick—too sick, much sick, no good, sahib.' The boy broke into an incomprehensible babble. He had been shaken very badly, he was in terror. Shendaw scrambled out of his bed and ran down the matted passage into Maclean's room. He stopped abruptly when he had passed the doorway; he felt sick, miserably sick as soon as he understood what had happened. Everything was torn, the bamboo matting, the blankets and sheets, even the yellow curtains. And crumpled on the floor, beyond the bed, Maclean was lying—dead.

In his stiff clenched hands were hundreds of crushed ants—red ants. Between his closed teeth were more ants, and in the corners of his open lips still more. Where his eyes had been there were no eyes.

They had come silently in the night up from the shadowed valley; they had seethed up the veranda steps and into Maclean's room. How they had succeeded in overwhelming the man Shendaw could not think. He had not heard a sound, he had heard nothing of the ghastly struggle—but had there been a struggle? Perhaps the swarming red devils had poured into Maclean's throat and stifled him before he could escape—it was horrible. Shendaw stared at his dead companion, incapable of thinking. Only his fingers twitched nervously.

With an effort Shendaw shook himself into action and overcame his horror. He picked up the body, and laid it on the bed. He covered the dead face which told so plainly of the agony that had been. The silent army had come and gone and behind it left death. He shuddered as he made for the veranda. Sitting down on the steps, he wrote short notes to Turner, Tibberd, and Jason, while Katinga Rao's melodious voice droned near by:

'Sahib, small things like ants and bees are sometimes trodden by feet, sometimes killed by a horse's tail. Such small things make big trouble. No sleep had I last night, for earlier I had seen that a tile had slipped from the roof of the Hiboormanni—from above entered misfortune. Maclean Sahib is dead—what misfortune, for he cannot give the present for this night's feast, and yet what good fortune there is, sahib, you are not dead.'

Shendaw did not hear the munshi. When he had finished the three notes the bearer gave them to waiting runners, and Shendaw

sat on the stone steps, head in hand, watching the leaves of the blue gums as they stirred in the wind, watching the sun mount over the hills, watching without knowing what he saw. The night mists rose from their dank lairs and dissolved in the yellow-blue light of day.

It was the lithe shikari Nunu who slipped unnoticed on to the veranda and placed a topee on Shendaw's head. It was Kantapa the pedlar who placed Tibberd's answering note in the planter's hands, and kicked the runner who delivered it round the bungalow for gaping on the troubles of the sahib.

Turner's answer came after the heat of midday. Jason's reply was brought to Shendaw as the pink light of sunset stained the bungalow walls and played tricks with the glowing banks of poinsettia bloom.

And when night fell, Shendaw was pacing up and down on the bamboo matting, while in the shadow of the blue gums stood Kantapa, Nunu, and Munshi Katinga Rao, listening to the sahib muttering to himself.

Only once or twice he stopped to look out over the wooded hills where the moon's light played with the shadows that cloaked the motionless sea of leaves. He looked long and earnestly into the night, as if he were trying to see the fretful, inconstant spirit which roamed through the serenity of the jungles. Then again he paced to and fro, still muttering. There was fever in his eyes, and sweat trickled from his temples. He was still pacing slowly and deliberately when the first drums of the puja feast sent their throbbing voices through the valley, when the first abandoned yell of the dancers echoed in the night. Shendaw stopped and listened. He saw the moon, the sleeping jungle, the fireflies high in the branches of the blue gums. His hand shot out as he shouted :  
'It is mine !'

It was then he saw a small man standing, topee in hand, on the veranda steps. Shendaw stared at the hesitating figure. He saw the bald head nodding at him in the lamplight ; he saw the round red face and two watery eyes looking at him full of amazement over black-rimmed spectacles. And he noticed the red dust lying thick in the creases of the man's loose drill suit.

'My name is Higgins' ; the stranger's voice was low and tired. 'My name is Higgins. I had hoped to reach Konpa to-night. My cartman lost the road. May I hope you can house me to-night ?' he added.

'Yes, of course—sit down—have a drink—you look tired—have something to eat.' Shendaw spoke in jerks as he moved towards the traveller.

'Thank you, a drink. I have had food on the way, just a little, but quite enough. A small drink, yes, please, and thank you, and——'

'Where is your tonga?' The little man started when Shendaw's sharp tones cut him short.

'I left it behind the premises; no doubt it is still there.'

'All right, it can stay there.' Shendaw sat down near his visitor after he had poured him out a drink. 'You had better have my room. I'll sleep in the office.'

'But,' objected Higgins, 'surely that is not necessary. Are all your rooms occupied?'

'The other one is.'

'Then I fear we shall disturb the occupant if we talk.'

'No—he is dead.'

Higgins jerked his spectacles further up his nose, gulped at the whisky, and repeated—'Dead?'

'Yes.' The answer was curt. 'I am tired,' added Shendaw as he got out of his chair, 'and I am sure you are. Come to your room. In the morning you can come down to Konpa. I am taking Maclean down.'

'Who is Maclean?'

'The dead man.'

'Oh—yes, yes, I see—quite.'

Later in the night Higgins thought he heard someone laugh in the bungalow, but he was not sure. The noise that disturbed him might well have come from the coolie lines, where tom-tom beaters rocked at their tasks under the cold light of the moon. Nevertheless, Higgins nearly convinced himself that the noise he had heard was a laugh; it sounded very like his host—very like his host—but he was not sure—not sure—there were many noises down in the coolie lines.

*(To be continued.)*

## *WHAT THE OLD PEOPLE THINK OF THEIR NEW PENSION LAW.*

BY EDITH SELLERS.

THE new Pension Law has many defects, we are told—quite truly too, no doubt; none the less it has already done good in the world. For, by lowering the age at which pensions may be claimed, from seventy to sixty-five, it has brought joy to the hearts of many old men and still more old women, who were in sore need of comfort. With food dear as it is, and shelter not only dear but hard to find, life has been but a sorry business of late for those who are nearing the end of their strength. And the average working man—working woman, too—is not only nearing but is already at the end of his strength before he is seventy. Already before he is sixty-five, indeed, employers begin to look on him askance, in doubt as to whether he is quite worth his wages; while employees, if called upon to work side by side with him, straightway begin to cavil. And when once he is passed sixty-five, those who could engage him ponder well before doing so; and year by year his chance of ever being engaged becomes smaller.

Until within the last few weeks, from sixty-five to seventy was not only the hardest time in the life of the average worker—that it is still—but, what is worse, the most hopeless time, the time when he or she was in most danger of 'going under,' and most inclined to wax resentful. In those days I rarely came across a working-class woman who had not a tale of woe to tell, who was not more or less sure that someone or other was doing her wrong. She felt she was old, too old to work, so old that it was hard for her to find work to do; yet she was too young, she was told, to claim an old age pension. She must wait until she was seventy before she could claim one; and the fact that she must wait rankled in her mind. For by that time she would be dead, she then, in her gloomy days, had never a doubt.

That was the state of things a few weeks ago; but since then a change has come, or so at least it seems to me. So far as I can judge, and I have been in fairly close touch with the aged and poor for many years now, there is less grievance-mongering among them

to-day than there was even a few weeks ago. Men and women who were then the veriest Jeremiahs, bewailing aloud the misery of their lot, are now going about rubbing their hands and chuckling. Then they had more to bear than they could bear, they declared ; and they had lost all hope of things ever being better ; whereas now they—not all of them, of course, but still a goodly section—seem inclined to think that fairly pleasant days may lie before them. Even the Ishmaelites among them are a touch less prone to rail against their fellows than they were. And all because a bitter grievance that they had long been cherishing has now been redressed ; all because whereas they used to take it for granted that they would never have old age pensions, now they are sure that they will, proof that even Ishmaelites may be optimists at heart. For there are still more than two years to wait before old age pensions may be claimed at sixty-five.

It is, of course, those who are already within hailing distance of sixty-three who are rejoicing the most at the passing of the Old Age Pension Reform Bill. For there will be no more waiting for them, when once they are sixty-five ; they will have forthwith what the Law gives. And what it gives will make all the difference in life to many of them, they are firmly convinced. To some of them, indeed, it will mean a few more years of life. Had there been no such law, those last five years from sixty-five to seventy would have levied a heavy toll on them, would have worn away much of their strength. It is life-shortening work, as well as heart-breaking, that just waiting, as they would have had to wait, for seventy to come, living from hand to mouth, on short commons, too, haunted the while by the dread lest they should be in their graves before it came, or, if not, at the end of their strength ; and that might mean the workhouse. And decent old people, we must not forget, have a dread of the workhouse ; and it was when they were between sixty-five and seventy that they were in most danger of having to betake themselves there.

‘ I should never have come here could I have had my old age pension when I was sixty-five,’ I have often been told by workhouse inmates. ‘ One can get along at a pinch till one’s sixty-five, but it’s no good trying to get along till one’s seventy.’ ‘ I knew it was no good trying, so I just lost heart and came off here,’ one poor woman added sorrowfully.

Now that they have their new Law most of those people will manage to get along until they are sixty-five ; and then they will

become old age pensioners. Thus they will never need to go to the workhouse, will never need to throw themselves on the parish, or so at least they think ; and that is why many of them are now rejoicing so heartily. And there is something quite pitiable in the heartiness with which the more worthy among them are rejoicing. Should they, in spite of their new Law, ever have to go there, their disappointment would indeed be heartrending.

In the eyes of the overwhelming majority, not only of the old people but of their younger kith and kin, the great merit of the new Law is that, when it is in force, it will give them the right to claim their old age pensions five years earlier than they can claim them now ; the right, in fact, to claim them, the chances are, before they are quite at the end either of their strength or of their money. And that is a great merit they all agree ; it redresses so sore a grievance, indeed, that they would have welcomed the passing of the Law gladly, even if it had had no other merit, had conferred on them no other boon. It has, however, another merit, one that appeals with quite special force to the more deserving among them. For it makes a clean sweep of certain conditions that are now attached to the granting of old age pensions ; and one of these conditions has long been a source of indignant wrath to the industrious ; and another, of endless resentment to the better-off among the thrifty.

Under the 1924 Law, which is still in force, a man is practically compelled to give up his regular work when he becomes an old age pensioner ; and a limit is fixed beyond which his savings must not go, or he forfeits his claim to a pension. Under the new Law, however, all who have the strength to work will be free to work, if such be their wish, free to earn as much as ever they can, even when they are old age pensioners ; while they who can save will be encouraged to save ; for, no matter how great their savings may be, their pensions will not be one jot or tittle the smaller. And that is hailed as a great boon by old age pensioners ; and also by future pensioners who are already past their prime. For even those among them who have no great wish either to work or to save, like the thought of being able to do so if they choose. And there are many old people who have a great wish to go on working even after they are seventy ; just as there are some who have a great wish to save as much as ever they can.

The handworkers who, after seventy, or even sixty-five, have the strength to do a day's hard work and earn a full day's wages are



comparatively few ; still, many of them have strength enough to do a little work and are all the better, the happier too, for doing it. For time hangs heavily on their hands when they have nothing to do. They are on the shelf, then ; and, as I was informed very emphatically a few days ago, 'Taint nice to be on the shelf. It makes one feel one's o' no use i' th' world ; and them as aint o' no use, aint wanted anywhere, nowadays. They're nought but a burden.'

Then, quite apart from their dislike of being on the shelf, those old people have good reasons for wishing to go on working to the very end, if they can. For the mere fact of going on working gives them a feeling of superiority over their weaker brethren, and that they enjoy. Moreover, what they earn, even though it be only a few shillings, is very welcome ; for when one's income is small, one is glad even of a few shillings wherewith to eke it out. Thus it is a real trouble, as well as a bitter grievance, to many very decent old people, that they must, as the law stands, give up their work before they can become old age pensioners. That clause in the 1924 Law which differentiates between earnings and savings, to the detriment of the earners and the profit of the savers, is in their eyes the veriest anathema.

'Why should a full pension be given to a man who has an unearned income of 25s. a week secured to him to the end of his days, while it is refused to one who is earning 15s. or even 10s. 6d., and who never knows from week to week that he may not lose his work ?' That is the sort of question some of them are never weary of asking. That it should be given to the one and refused to the other is flagrantly unjust, they maintain ; quite iniquitous in fact. So strong is the feeling among some of them that, rather than give up their work, no matter how little they may be earning, they refuse to apply for their pensions. I know a very decent old fellow of seventy-three who has again and again refused a pension. I know an old woman, too, who, rather than give up a bit of charring she does, accepted an old age pension of 6s. a week instead of 10s. only a few months ago. And there are many such folk ; and they are all rejoicing now because, when their new Law is in force, they will be free to go on working, and yet be old age pensioners. Why, even if it had done nothing for them beyond making them free, they would have welcomed the passing of the Law.

While the old people are rejoicing at the thought of being able to work, some of their younger relatives are railing against them



for rejoicing, talking to them angrily of unfair competition in the labour market, lowered wages and the like; but they might just as well talk to the wind. For the rejoicers know, as they say, 'nought about economics,' and they care as little as they know. Besides 'it's all rubbish,' they maintain. 'Now how could a labour market be ought t'worse for our bit o' work?' they ask scornfully.

So far as working is concerned, the great mass of the aged poor, even those who will never have the strength to do another stroke of work, are unfeignedly glad of the freedom the new Law will secure for them. They regard it as something really worth having, something that touches them closely. In what concerns saving, however, it is otherwise. It is only the élite among them, the fairly well-to-do, who regard the abolition of the income test as a personal matter. For them it is, of course, a great boon, one which they appreciate keenly; but for the rank and file it is 'just nought.' 'We are none the better off for that,' they declare. 'It doesn't touch us at all.'

Their contention is that the income limit never has touched the average worker, not even the man worker, much less the woman, never has prevented either the one or the other from obtaining a pension. It did not touch them when it was fixed at 8s. a week; and now if 15s. of it be savings it is fixed at 25s. a week. And there is proof that they are right. For in March 1924, when no one whose savings brought him in more than 10s. a week could obtain a full pension, there were 916,771 old age pensioners, and 853,859 of them, i.e. 93 per cent., had full pensions. Thus out of every 100 pensioners only seven had saved more than enough to bring them in 10s. a week each. And judging by those whose applications for pensions I have filled in, most of the remaining ninety-three had saved nothing at all. They had never had the chance to save anything, many of the old women assured me. They must spend week by week what they earned, if they were to live decently. And the few who had been able to save had had to spend their savings before they were seventy. Still, although the income limit does not touch the many, those whom it does touch are delighted that it is to be abolished. And one is glad that they should be delighted; for most of them are very deserving old men and women, who have worked hard their whole lives long, pinched and saved, and have had but little cause for rejoicing.

While the old people approve warmly of their new Law as a whole, some of them are a little inclined to cavil at one of its enactments, although, curiously enough, not at either of the enactments at

which they might perhaps have been expected to cavil. I have not yet come across a man or a woman above sixty who regards as a grievance having to pay the extra pennies that will have to be paid for insurance when the new Law is in force. Most of them are much too glad that they will have their pensions at sixty-five to grudge the price they must pay for them. And what is most curious still, I have come across very few who regard themselves as injured because, under the new Law as under the old, the amount of their pensions will be only 10s. a week. Had the 10s. been raised to 15s., or, better still, to 20s., they would, of course, have been jubilant; for to make 10s. last out a whole week means a hard fight. Still, most of them are shrewd enough to realise that, as things are, 10s. is as much as there is any chance of their obtaining. For no one knows better than they do that these are hard times. They know too, that, as an old lady once informed me, in a confidential whisper, 'Nowadays the Government's got to pay out a terrible sight o' money.'

Not but that there are complainers among the old people, as among the rest of the world, and especially among those who are sixty-five, or soon will be. They grumble sorely at the enactment that decrees they must wait for two full years, after the Law is in force, before they may claim their old age pensions. That they resent the more bitterly because the great majority of widows will be able to claim their pensions without any such waiting. Then, among the alone-standing old age pensioners whose strength is beginning to fail them there are some who are sorely disappointed because, under the new Law as under the old, they will have no refuge but the workhouse when too feeble to live alone. They had cherished the hope, it seems, that under the new Law something in the way of Homes, quite apart from the workhouse, might be provided for old age pensioners who are infirm. There is disappointment, too, among some of them because, even under the new Law, they may, as they complain, have to be buried by the parish; and they think that they really might be spared that indignity.

None the less, the great mass of the old folk are undoubtedly well content with their Law, and are for the most part grateful for what it gives them. Even those who feel no call to gratitude, who look on what it gives as their due, as what they ought to have, and would have had long ago, were there justice in the land, even they are glad of what it gives, although they growl because it does not

give more. All sorts and conditions of the aged poor are rejoicing, in fact, because they have a new Law, rejoicing most of all because their new Law will redress their great grievance, will save them, or, if too late to save them, will save their younger friends and relatives, from those five long weary years of waiting for their old age pensions.

Now it is well, surely, not only for them, but for the whole community, that they should rejoice; well that their great grievance should be redressed; for grievance makes for friction while rejoicing makes for peace. Still, too high a price may be paid even for peace; and there is no great gain in redressing a grievance that thousands cherish, if the redressing entails another grievance that hundreds of thousands may cherish. The lowering of the age at which old age pensions are granted means, of course, that more pensions will have to be paid; and every extra pension means an extra expense. And these are lean kine days, we must not forget; ratepayers and taxpayers alike have heavy burdens to bear, burdens so heavy that industry is crippled; and those extra pensions must inevitably add to their burdens. They might, indeed, render them too heavy to be borne, might prove the last straw on the camel's back, and that would spell disaster all round. Nay, not only might they, but perhaps they would, were it not that for every extra penny spent on old age pensions, more than a halfpenny will be saved out of the money spent on poor relief, unless all the augurs be at fault.

At the present time, as any ratepayer may see for himself, there is a large number of old men and women in our workhouses who would never have gone there could they have had their old age pensions at sixty-five. They went there because they knew that, let them do what they would, they would have to go there before they were seventy. They therefore gave up the struggle for life outside and went off there, some of them soon after they were sixty. And once there, there they stay, as a rule, miserable though the more respectable of them undoubtedly are. For although some leave at seventy, to claim their old age pensions, most of them have not enough strength or energy left, by that time, to make a fresh start in life, especially as their old homes have been broken up. And the average cost per head in Poor Law Institutions, workhouses included, is now £65 10s. a year, while an old age pension is only £26. Thus those poor old creatures who drifted there while waiting for their pensions are each costing the

ratepayers more than twice as much as they would cost the taxpayers were they living outside as old age pensioners. And such folk as they are will for the most part live outside when the new Law is in force. They will manage by hook or crook to support themselves and keep their homes together until they are sixty-five. Then they will claim their pensions, which they will be able to eke out by what they can earn. And the whole community will be the richer.

Nor is that all. Now that the new Law will soon be in force, many men and still more women who have never saved before in their lives will begin to save, unless, indeed, I judge them wrongly, and am quite out in all my reckonings.

Under the old Law, the average unskilled labourer who had a wife and children to support had no great inducement to save, we must not forget. For he had no great hope of being able to save enough to secure himself against ever having to apply for poor relief, or even against being forced to go into the workhouse. The chances were, he knew, that whatever he might save he would have to spend before he was seventy; and that he would have to apply for relief, therefore, before he could claim his old age pension. And although he hated to apply for relief, if he must apply, he did not care very much whether he applied a few years earlier or later, whether at sixty or sixty-nine in fact. Thus he saw no reason for saving, as whether he saved or not he might become a pauper. He spent what he earned, therefore; and when he could no longer earn enough to support himself he applied for poor relief, and obtained it at the expense, of course, of the ratepayers.

That state of things is changed, however, and to the advantage of the ratepayer, now that the day is within hail when old age pensions may be claimed at sixty-five, and old age pensioners may work as much as they choose. Even the average unskilled worker has now a strong inducement to save; for, if he saves, he is fairly sure of never seeing the inside of a workhouse, never having to apply for poor relief. In the days of his strength he will be able to lay by enough to help out what he earns, when his strength is failing, until he is sixty-five, when he will claim his pension; and when he has his pension, he will still be able to earn a few shillings wherewith to supplement it. Thus he will save, and by his saving the ratepayers will be the gainers, while he himself will be the better off all round.

We are often told, in this our day, that the poor are losing their old dread of having to apply for relief; but, so far as the aged respectable poor are concerned, that is certainly not the case. I often come across old men and women who have to choose between the workhouse and something akin to slow starvation; and almost as often as not it is a hopeless business trying to persuade them that of the two evils the workhouse is the lesser.

'I have never had a penny of poor relief in my life,' a very decent old fellow informed me loftily, a few weeks ago; and there was the ring of real delight, as well as of pride, in his voice as he spoke. Yet, unless his face belied him sorely, he had not had a good square meal for many, many a long day. He is one of those who are now rejoicing because, thanks to their new Law, they feel sure that come what may they will never have to apply for poor relief.

EDITH SELLERS.

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### THE WATER DIVINER.

IN the June issue of the CORNHILL Mr. Rowland Burgess gave a lucid and interesting description of his experiences with the divining rod.

The question as to whether the so-called power of this somewhat primitive instrument is due to supernatural agency or is inherent in the diviner, or the rod itself, is one which can be satisfactorily answered by bringing to bear on the subject certain facts which are the outcome of not very generally known scientific research.

Accordingly the writer ventures to bring forward this evidence, and to corroborate it by quoting, with very kind permission, the personal experiences of that eminent consulting geologist, Sir William Boyd Dawkins, F.R.S., whose name has figured in a very large proportion of the waterworks undertakings in this country, and with whom the writer has had the honour of a close association for some years.

The absurdity of supposing any direct connection or 'electrical force' between the object divined and the rod itself is proved by the variety of uses to which the rod has from time to time been put. Thus, apart from the detection of water, it has been employed in search for gold and mineral ores, and in the discovery of buried coins and treasures, and even criminals in hiding. Furthermore, the rod has varied in shape, size, and material according to the peculiar whims of the diviner, and in some instances has actually been dispensed with altogether, the diviner having walked over the ground with outstretched arms until water has been 'sensed.'

We may therefore assume that any relation which exists is between the diviner himself and the object, and will proceed to examine what evidence we have in this direction.

Some years ago Professor Barrett, of Dublin University, made an exhaustive enquiry into the physiological and psychological conditions attendant on the unnatural and strained position in which the rod is held by professional diviners, and came to the conclusion that the twisting of the stick was due to involuntary muscular action on the part of the diviner, and that any idea or suggestion in the latter's mind associated with the bending of the rod would cause spontaneous movement. Sir William Boyd



Dawkins corroborates this evidence by his own personal experiments with the rod. He found that after a while it was a simple matter to deflect the rod at will, and succeeded, for instance, in pointing it at certain pictures in a room according to his wish.

The testimony of these two eminent authorities is by no means difficult to accept when the enormous number of muscles present in the palm of the hand are taken into consideration, and we may therefore conclude that it is the working of the diviner's mind that produces the 'ideo-motor' action necessary to cause deflection of the rod, and proceed to examine the psychological evidence.

Everybody cannot be a diviner, though it seems apparent from the experiences of Mr. Burgess and others that an 'uninitiated' person may become temporarily 'magnetised' by the diviner, provided that the mind of the former is sufficiently concentrated on the object of the experiment so as to be influenced by the mind of the diviner. A case of mind telepathy. The magnetism, however, is only transient, and many persons remain unaffected.

Sir William tells how he collected together a party of friends near Bath and invited a well-known diviner to demonstrate his powers of divination. It was agreed that one of the party should hide several gold coins (which dates the incident pre-Bradbury) under a stone in an adjacent field, unobserved by the remainder of the party. The hider was then to return and place his hand on the diviner's shoulder, when the latter would proceed immediately to find the coins, with the aid of his rod.

The gold hidden, the hider returned and placed his hand as arranged, whereupon the diviner led the party directly to the stone where the gold was hidden, and there the twig turned vigorously. To the surprise of all, however, on lifting up the stone the gold was *gone*! (Evidently there had been others interested in the experiment.) The point proved is a psychological one: the diviner's mind being in a particularly receptive condition was subconsciously affected by the hider's mind, the transference of thought being made easier by the physical contact. The absence of the coins on arriving at the spot proves the fallacy of assuming an 'electrical force' between the rod and the gold. The sensation that would be experienced by the hider on arriving at the hiding place would be transferred to the diviner's mind, and the impression thus registered would be sufficient to cause physical movement of the muscles and violent depression of the rod.

The true art of divining is confined to a few professional diviners,



who are usually typical 'sons of the soil,' without the least exact knowledge of science and with an entirely erroneous impression of the actual conditions under which subterranean water exists, but who are capable of making their minds an absolute blank, in which peculiarly receptive state they would be easily affected by any particular set of phenomena.

The native home of these diviners is in Somerset or Devon, districts where the true 'rustics' still cling to superstition and magic, and where the water in otherwise impervious rocks occurs in fissures (more or less vertical planes) running across a district. From this peculiarly local condition the diviners have derived the entirely erroneous impression that water occurs underground everywhere in a series of running streams and channels, just as it does on the surface.

Under normal conditions, where water occurs below ground, it fills in the interstices and joints of porous rocks, and since these latter occur as sheets of varying thickness and stretching under a region for many square miles, it becomes obvious that wherever a well is sunk in such an area water *must* be tapped at a greater or less depth, according to the distance of the water-bearing rock below the surface.

Professor Dawkins recounts how a well-known diviner was put to the test in such an area. The diviner set off across a tract of land and demonstrated how the water occurred in under-ground streams. Each time such a stream was crossed the twig pointed; this it did in all eleven times in traversing the chosen tract of land. Unknown to the diviner, however, Professor Dawkins placed a small peg at each spot, and when the diviner was requested to retrace his steps he did so willingly, the stick again pointing eleven times. Unfortunately for the diviner, the points on the inward journey did not coincide with the points on the outward. Actually, of course, water occurred under the whole of the area, contrary to the diviner's theory.

In many instances where a diviner has been successful there has been obvious surface evidence to the expert eye of the underground existence of water, especially at shallow depths, and since the professional diviner is likely to be accustomed to every detail in the topography of his own native district, it seems highly probable that it is the conscious, or even subconscious, detection of surface indication which accounts for a large percentage of his successes in other districts. This is corroborated by the fact that diviners are usually

most successful in the case of shallow wells, where surface evidence is almost always present.

We may, therefore, summarise by stating that the twisting of the rod is due to involuntary muscular action, which action is incited by any idea associated with the use of the rod. This idea may be obtained, in the case of water, by the conscious or subconscious detection of the surface evidence due to shrewd observation on the part of the diviner.

In conclusion, while it may be urged that the diviners frequently *are* right, yet many cases are on record where the diviner has failed and a geological expert resorted to.

EDGAR MORTON.

## *THE HERMIT.*

BY KENNETH POTTER.

### I.

It was in the Charing Cross Road that I first met him. I had gone into a second-hand bookshop, quite idly, just to have a look round. Nobody seemed to be inside except the proprietor, who knows me well, and allows me to examine the books as long as I like, without troubling me to buy. After a few minutes I suddenly noticed a curious figure, standing quite still, in a dark recess. It gave me a slight shock, as I had had no notion that anyone was there, and the man I saw was certainly something out of the ordinary. He came forward just as I looked in his direction, and I had a good chance of seeing what he was like.

He was an elderly man, well over sixty, I thought at the time, though from what he told me afterwards I gathered that he was only about fifty-five, tall, but very much bent, with a peculiar shuffling walk, as though he were slightly lame. His hair was almost white, though his short beard was iron-grey, his cheeks hollow, and his whole face deeply wrinkled; his body extremely thin, and his rusty black suit, which had been a good suit perhaps fifteen years ago, hung loosely about him. His eyes were his most noticeable feature; they were bright blue, beneath shaggy greyish-white brows, and their expression was half that of a child, half that of a fanatic.

He came slowly towards me, and looked at me hard. I was standing in front of some theological books; not that I am greatly interested in theology, but I had reached that point in my perambulation of the shop.

'Dead, out-of-date,' he exclaimed suddenly, pointing to the books; 'there is a new dispensation. It has been revealed to me.'

I could well believe that the books were dead and out of date; they certainly had that appearance. I was rather surprised by his address, and was trying to think of a suitable answer, when he spoke again. I was wearing dark clothes of somewhat clerical aspect, and he had evidently decided that I was a parson.

'You're striving in vain, you and your Church,' he said. 'You're preaching to the deaf. It's a lost cause.'

I hastened to explain that it was not my profession to preach to anybody. He seemed disappointed, but apparently he still looked on me as a possible disciple, for he began to talk about theological evolution, whatever that may be, and though I displayed a lamentable ignorance of the subject, he ended by asking me to come to his room, which was not far off, so that we could discuss these matters more fully.

By this time I had a strong suspicion that he was mad. Mad people, however, are usually interesting and I was curious to discover the precise form that his madness took. It seemed on the whole to be an even chance whether he would call himself the Messiah or Antichrist. At any rate he appeared to be quite harmless. I accepted the invitation, and we went out of the shop.

As we passed the Rationalist Bookshop I watched him closely, wondering what his attitude to that establishment might be. His eye fell on the name of Tom Paine, and he muttered something which unfortunately I could not catch. That was the only remark he made for some time, and he looked as though he were reflecting deeply. One thing I noticed; the curious way in which he shrank back, almost with a shudder, when anyone passed near to him.

But I was soon mainly occupied with the endeavour to remember our route; an endeavour that was ineffectual, for I lost my way hopelessly when I left his lodgings. We passed through a number of dingy by-streets, and finally stopped before what seemed to be an ancient house, so far as I could judge by the dim light of a winter evening, somewhere at the back of Soho.

My companion led the way up a dirty wooden staircase, which creaked horribly under our feet. Inside the house it was quite dark, and for a moment I felt some suspicion, not liking the look either of the quarter or of the dwelling. However, it was too late to draw back, even if I had been sure that I wanted to draw back; and after all my host had not the air of a criminal.

He opened a massive creaking door—everything creaked in this house—and we entered a room in which I could discern hardly anything, as it was now very dark outside, and the only light was provided by a feeble, flickering fire.

My host—Barrett his name was, he had told me—proceeded to light an oil lamp, which smelt abominably, then filled a small kettle at a tap, and put it on the embers of the fire. Meanwhile I

was sitting in an old moth-eaten armchair and looking round the room with curiosity. The oil lamp gave a very bad light, and in any case there was not much to see—dirty whitewashed walls, a deal table, a bed, a washstand, a cupboard, and three or four chairs. The room was fairly large, and indescribably cheerless.

Barrett, having boiled the kettle and produced plates, cups, and bread and butter from the cupboard, now invited me to have some tea. It was almost the first time he had spoken since we left the shop. Tea seemed to enliven him, and he showed an inclination to resume his discourse.

‘I don’t know what moved me to tell you of my mission,’ he said, drawing his chair up to the fire. ‘I have had enough of preaching—more than enough; preaching to mankind, that is. But even among mankind, perhaps there is a remnant, a small remnant. I thought there was something sympathetic in your face.’

I was flattered by this, and looked as sympathetic as I possibly could.

‘I shall listen to you with great interest,’ I said; ‘but I’m afraid I didn’t quite understand you just now. You said you did not wish to preach to mankind. To whom will you preach, then?’

He smiled. ‘I thought I should surprise you,’ he said. ‘I will explain my mission very soon. But first of all I should tell you a little about my life.’

And he began a long narrative which I shall condense as far as possible.

He had been for many years a grocer in a provincial town. This calling had not been his choice. He had always been fond of books, and had wished to be trained for the Methodist ministry, his parents being of that persuasion. But on leaving the local grammar-school he had been put into his father’s business, and had afterwards inherited the whole concern. Apparently it had not prospered in his hands, and this did not surprise me, for I have never seen a man less likely to be successful in business than Barrett. He had married early, but his wife had died in a few years, leaving no children. At the age of forty-five he found himself without family or relations, and almost without friends, for he had never been a man of social habits.

He determined to sell the business, for which he had never cared, and to realise his early ambition of becoming a preacher. But his native town seemed too narrow a sphere, and after a short period of local preaching, without any marked success, he resolved to come to London. His means were narrow, but he was independent, and

could afford to please himself. He had decided that the regular ministry offered him no scope, and his intention was to preach in the public parks. He did not know London, and he had a touching confidence in his own powers of evangelisation.

Of his experience in the parks he spoke with extreme bitterness. Very few people would listen to him, and those who did refused to take him seriously. His considered judgment of the inhabitants of London was that they were a generation of vipers.

The failure of his preaching had profoundly soured him. He did not lose faith in himself, but his evangelical enthusiasm gradually turned to a feeling of hatred and contempt for mankind in general. He had long since given up his addresses in Hyde Park, and now spent most of his time in reading, mainly, I suspect, in bookshops with easy-going proprietors, as there were very few books in his room. And his reading had brought on a great change in his theological beliefs.

'The human race,' he said, 'has been tried and has been found wanting. By the covenant of the rainbow we are assured against a second flood. Nevertheless I am convinced that men, hard-hearted and stiff-necked as they are, will not be suffered to remain much longer upon the earth. Many species have been created and have disappeared; why not the human species also? But the Word of Salvation will remain, and it must be preached. The Jews rejected it, and it passed to the Gentiles; the Gentiles have rejected it, and it must pass to others. And it is I who am the new Paul of Tarsus. He, a Jew, preached to the Gentiles; I, a man, will preach——' he stopped, and looked at me fixedly, as if seized with a doubt whether I were fit for the new revelation.

I had begun to be bored with this discourse. It was four or five times as long as the summary that I have given. Barrett seemed afraid to come to the point, and I could not understand in the least what he was driving at.

'I beg your pardon,' I said, after having waited a short time for him to continue, 'all this is very obscure to me. I cannot see whom you are going to convert. The gospel was intended for the human race, and you reject the human race. I have heard that one of the Fathers—Origen, wasn't it?—believed in the ultimate conversion of the devil. Is that your idea? It sounds rather a difficult task to undertake.'

At this moment a large tabby cat, which I had not hitherto observed, rose from beside the fireplace, stretched itself, and walked towards Barrett with its tail erect, purring sonorously. Barrett



bent down and stroked the cat, twisted his bony fingers nervously for a few moments, then 'It is to the animals,' he said, 'it is to the animals that I shall preach.'

'To the animals?'

'Yes, to the animals,' said Barrett firmly. 'And why not? Didn't St. Anthony preach to the fishes, because men would not listen to him? And did not the fishes revere his words? It is the animals that we must convert. They will remain upon the earth when men are gone.'

Barrett was madder than I had believed possible. I felt sorry for him, and perhaps it would have been better to say nothing more; but I could not help raising some obvious objections to his scheme.

'I don't quite see how you are going to communicate with them,' I said.

'If, by a miracle, they understood St. Anthony,' answered Barrett, 'why should they not, by another miracle, understand me? I feel that I am specially called to this work, and I have as good reason to expect a miracle as any man ever had. And if a miracle is not granted I can learn their language. Do you imagine that they never speak to each other? This cat understands me well enough already.'

'But even if they do understand you and are converted,' I objected, 'what is the use, if I may so express myself? They haven't any souls to be saved. They were sent for our benefit and have no value in themselves. The sheep, for instance, was created that we might shear and eat it.' I knew this, because I had been piously brought up.

'No souls to be saved!' exclaimed Barrett. 'And how do you know that? Haven't learned divines believed in a future life for animals? I deny that there are any bodies without souls. Of course, an animal's soul is more rudimentary than ours, just as a horse's hoof is less developed than the human hand; but the soul, however rudimentary, exists, and can be saved. Besides, what right have we to say that an animal's spiritual capacities cannot be improved? Hasn't the human spirit developed since the Stone Age? May we not hope for a future race of animals, far more spiritual than the animals, or the men, of to-day?'

'I foresee that you will meet with difficulties,' I said doubtfully.

'Of course,' replied Barrett, 'and they will be surmounted. And there can be no doubt that the work is worth doing. Don't animals need the consolations of religion? They have been cruelly oppressed by men, slaughtered and tortured without mercy. St. Francis said that they were our brothers, but his teaching was

unheeded. I am his legitimate successor, and I shall accomplish the task of which he had but a dim perception.'

I inquired what steps he intended to take.

'I shall go and live in a solitary place,' answered Barrett, 'a place as remote as possible from men. For one thing, the society of men is distasteful to me, and I have given up all hope of making them better. It is also desirable that I should be surrounded by wild animals, whose spiritual vision has not been impaired by intercourse with degraded human beings. The less an animal knows of men the more likely it will be to trust me and listen to me. I think I know a suitable spot, and in a few days I shall have left London for ever.'

Barrett became silent, and stared abstractedly at the fire. The cat, which had been gazing up at him with a look of wonderful intelligence, sprang upon his knees and curled itself up to sleep. I could not think of anything to say. Argument seemed hopeless. I had begun to feel an affection for the man. There was something rather noble about Barrett, in spite of his absurdity, and I would have given a good deal to be able to restore his reason.

We sat for a long time without speaking. Outside the wind had risen, and rain was pattering on the window. In the room there was dead silence, except for the sleepy purring of the cat and the occasional noise of a coal falling over in the grate. At length I looked at my watch. It was later than I had thought. I had to go out to dinner, and there was no time to be lost.

Barrett accompanied me downstairs.

'I wish you success,' I said, as he opened the door.

'Thank you,' he answered. 'Good night.'

As the door shut I saw him bend down and speak to the cat, which had followed us and was rubbing against his legs. And I went out into the cold, wet night.

## II.

During the following summer I went for a walking tour by myself in a remote part of England. On the third day I found myself towards evening in the middle of a wild, thickly-wooded stretch of country, several miles from the small town at which I intended to stay the night. I was feeling extremely tired. I had covered a considerable distance that day, in hot weather, and was by no means in good training, having only just recovered from an illness. I unfolded my map and examined it carefully. The road made a very sharp bend further on, and it seemed that by cutting

across country I might save nearly two miles. A rough track was visible on the right. It was not marked on the map, but it went in the direction that I wanted, and I determined to follow it and take the risk of losing my way.

After about twenty minutes the track, which had become more and more overgrown, stopped altogether at the edge of a wood. I could see nothing ahead of me but trees, and I was not very sure of my bearings, the track having twisted about a good deal in the last few minutes; but I decided that having come so far I would go on. At last the trees began to thin, and I came out into the open. On my left the ground sloped steeply, and I looked down over a broad valley, with blue hills the other side, on one of which I thought I could perceive the town for which I was bound. I was just examining the lie of the country when I heard a sound among the trees on my right. It was a human voice, undoubtedly, speaking at some length. I went back into the wood, hoping to get some information about the way.

As I advanced the voice became clearer. I could now distinguish many of the words, and to my amazement it appeared that someone was preaching a sermon in this desolate spot. I concluded that some zealous clergyman had chosen the place to practise for next Sunday, though this seemed sufficiently improbable. A few more steps brought me to the edge of a clearing, and I beheld a remarkable sight.

On the other side of the clearing there was a large, knotted oak. Under it stood a tall old man in black clothes, with dishevelled white hair. I recognised Barrett at once. In his left hand was a book, no doubt a Bible; the right was raised in the air, as if to emphasise the fervent words which poured from his lips. Before him, only a few yards away, squatted a hare, gazing intently at him, and evidently quite without fear. There could be no question that it was to the hare he was preaching.

For some time I watched them. It was strange and beautiful. The evening sunlight, shining through the branches, fell on Barrett's thin, worn face, and he seemed transfigured. I could have imagined that he was a mediaeval saint. A thrush flew down from the oak and settled on his shoulder. Still he preached, and the hare squatted motionless before him.

At length I came forward. The startled hare scudded down the slope, and the thrush took wing into the wood. Barrett stopped abruptly, and shrank back as he saw a human being. I addressed him with embarrassment, feeling somehow that I was an intruder

upon sacred things. After the first shock he seemed not ill-pleased to see me. Perhaps even he sometimes felt the need of human companionship. He said that the town for which I was making was fully seven miles away, over rough country, and that it would be foolish to try to reach it that night, tired as I evidently was. He offered me his hospitality, which I was glad enough to accept.

'My cottage is quite close,' he said, 'just at the bottom of this hill. A gamekeeper used to live there, but it has been deserted for years, and is very ruinous, though one room is quite habitable. I happened to meet the owner a long time ago, in my youth, and he makes no objection to having me as a tenant. Nobody would suspect me of poaching,' he added with a melancholy smile.

I inquired as tactfully as I could about the success of his preaching. He sighed.

'It is difficult, very difficult. Perhaps I have accomplished something. But I did not realise that the task would be so hard. I have lived in towns all my life, and I knew very little about animals. Some of them are as cruel as men. Foxes and weasels are very cruel to rabbits. I try to make them gentle. But then, if they do not kill rabbits, how are they to live themselves?' He sighed again.

By this time we were close to his cottage. It was indeed ruinous, as he had said, and my first thought was one of regret that I had not gone on to the town. However, I had accepted his offer, and I could not hurt his feelings by changing my mind now. Besides, I was curious to see a little more of his way of life. We entered, and I saw a barely-furnished room, very much like the one in which he had lived in London, except that it was smaller and had a lower ceiling. But at least it appeared to be water-tight.

I had just sat down when Barrett's tabby cat ran in with a live bird in its mouth, and came up to rub itself against his legs, purring loudly, evidently much pleased with itself and anticipating praise. The bird chirped feebly and fluttered its wings. Barrett uttered a cry of grief.

'Again! again! And I thought I had cured him.'

He wrung his hands and a tear dropped on his cheek. The cat, alarmed, ran out of the door, with the bird still in its mouth. Barrett made as if to follow, then checked himself, as though he knew it was useless. He seemed quite overcome.

'That very one,' he moaned, his eyes dim with tears, 'the thrush that I knew so well, the one that perched on my shoulder only a few minutes ago. Yes, animals are as brutal as men.'

I tried to console him with some well-meant platitudes, but it

was a long time before he recovered his calmness. At last he said that he must go out and get some vegetables for supper. He never ate animal food, he explained apologetically, and hoped that I would put up with his simple fare.

I went out with him to the little plot which he cultivated at the back of his cottage, and talked to him as he stooped at his work ; for he would not allow me to give him any assistance. He had been here for some months, he said, and scarcely ever saw a human being, except when he went to do his marketing. He was quite happy, except that his preaching seemed slow to take effect, and very seldom suffered from loneliness ; he would be content to stay here for the rest of his life. I caught something of his mood, as I gazed over the moorland towards the setting sun ; certainly there was an infinite peace in this place.

After I had shared his anchorite's meal, seeing that I was very sleepy, he offered me his bed, and would take no refusal. 'I can sleep anywhere,' he said ; 'indeed, on fine nights like this, I often sleep in the open from choice ; I like to be near to them, near to my children.' And after wishing me a good night he left the cottage. In a few moments I was asleep.

I was awakened about six o'clock by the sun shining through the cracked window-frame. Barrett was nowhere to be seen. I dressed quickly and went out to look for him, and after a short time I wandered up to the place where I had met him first. There he stood as before, his hand uplifted, preaching, preaching with all his soul. I withdrew silently.

After breakfast he gave me minute directions about my route, and as I said good-bye I ventured to ask whether I might come and see him again. I was going to stay for a short time at a friend's house, and thought of doing a few days' walking in this district on my return. He seemed quite pleased. 'Yes,' he said, 'I shall be very glad to see you. You are not cruel to animals, as most men are.' This, I suppose, was because I had expressed my dislike of shooting, and had paid some trifling attentions to his cat. After I had gone a little way I turned back and saw the bowed figure slowly climbing the hill to the accustomed spot.

About three weeks later I was walking across the moors, which were now beginning to turn purple, in the direction of Barrett's cottage. I was full of good resolutions. The friend with whom I had been staying, who is a most orthodox Churchman and a man of stern common sense, had been deeply disgusted when I told him about Barrett. It would be difficult to say whether he had been

more indignant with Barrett or with myself. His general conclusion, which he reached after a long and emphatic harangue, was that Barrett was not fit to remain at large ; that as Barrett was at large, the best thing would be for him to die as soon as possible ; that if he did die the blame would rest entirely with me, because I had encouraged him in a foolish, useless, and unwholesome manner of life, or at least made no attempt to counteract his madness. Chastened by these observations, which my friend delivered with a prodigious vehemence, I was resolved to speak firmly to Barrett for his good, though I had little hope of making any impression ; indeed I am not sure that at the bottom of my heart I wanted to make any impression.

The cottage was now in sight, and I began to look eagerly for signs of Barrett. He was visible nowhere, and I concluded that he was probably preaching at the top of the hill. As I came closer I noticed that the little vegetable plot had rather a neglected air, and a fear came over me that Barrett might be ill. There was no answer to my knock on the door. I listened carefully ; there was not a sound except the chirping of the grasshoppers from the meadow-land near by. I knocked again ; still there was no answer. I pushed the door, and it yielded.

The room was quite empty, and looked as though it had been deserted for some time. I wandered aimlessly round it, musing over the mystery of Barrett's disappearance. At last I happened to look on the dusty mantelpiece, and saw an envelope addressed to myself. I opened it hastily, and this is what I read—

'Good-bye. I am very sorry not to have seen you, but it was impossible for me to stay here any longer. Two days after you left a gamekeeper came, and he told me terrible things. There is to be a great deal of shooting here this autumn ; and the hounds often meet near by, he said. I could not bear to see the murder of my children, though it is hard to go, just when I thought my work was beginning to bear fruit. And that is not all. The man set traps. I missed my poor cat, and at last found him caught in one of them. I fear he had been there a long time. I had to kill the poor creature to put him out of his misery.

'I am going far away, very far away, to some place where men never come. Perhaps there is still such a place, somewhere in this cruel world. I have not quite lost hope that I shall find what I want.'

But I do not know whether he found it, for I never saw him again.



# ITALIAN BANDITTI IN 1820.

BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

## II.

IN the meantime, however, and before this arrangement could be carried out, things took a different turn. The Captain told me he had received a communication from the Government offering them six thousand scudi for my release, together with a free pardon on condition of their all enlisting in the National Guards, then forming to defend the country against the Austrians, who were marching upon Naples; and further threatening, in case they refused these terms, to send a military force to take them all and to destroy their villages and scour the whole country. He said he would have nothing to do with their money because it was to be fetched by one of the gang, and he, as one of them, would not trust himself in their hands. He said he had written back to say that he would release me upon receiving a full, free and unconditional pardon for himself and gang, with leave to go to their homes. 'But at all events,' said he, 'you are free whether the money you wrote for last comes or not. However, you must remain with us for the present.' This was an odd reading of freedom, but I had no choice. I then asked him if he would be kind enough to return me my passport, and he looked over the papers he had taken from us, and I pointed out my passport among them; when after satisfying himself that it was my passport and not an order for money, which he ascertained by my shewing him the many different visas written upon it, some of which were in Italian, and which after a great deal of trouble he succeeded in reading, he agreed. He then said very sharply, 'Ah, it would have been well for you if this had been signed by me before you came into these parts, but, however, I will sign it now.' So he took his pen in hand, and having looked it well over he followed the wording of one of the other visas and wrote the following words, 'Vista da me Antonio Mattei Secretario della Montagna,' and added, 'If you show this you will never be molested again by Brigands in this country.' He then said, 'Our haunt is discovered and I must be off,' and instantly the Banditti separated into two parties, the captain taking one party and leaving me with the other in charge of Pietro Paulo. These, when the Captain was well out of sight, began to dispute amongst themselves what was to

be done with me, and Pietro Paulo, who had from the first been my greatest enemy, several times advanced towards me with his stiletto in his hand, and threatened to kill me there and then, while most of the others insisted that nothing should be done until they saw the Captain again. Paulo was overpowered, and after a short stop we set off again, and after walking three or four hours we arrived at a hut. Here they had expected to find the Captain and his party, but as they had not arrived we remained outside the hut awaiting their arrival nearly an hour, the party squabbling the whole time as to my fate, and I was told that for having caused a military force to be employed against them they were determined to put me to death, and they gave me until the Captain arrived to prepare. At length they observed the Captain coming, when one of the gang came up to me, and pushing me into the doorway of the hut with his firelock, he said, 'There, get in with you, and take the best place, you have not long to live.' It is singular that the Captain afterwards apologised to me for this man, and said he begged my pardon for his rudeness, but some of his family had been suffering on his account and he was out of humour. The Banditti remained outside talking and squabbling for some time. At length the Captain entered the hut, followed by most of the others, and at once came up to me and said, 'I can now give you my hand with pleasure and again tell you you are free,' when Pietro Paulo rushed upon me, stiletto in hand, but the Captain, assisted by some others, pushed him aside. They then all took their seats and an angry and desultory discussion took place, Pietro Paulo making several attempts to put his threats into execution, declaring that the Government had unjustly murdered several of his relations and he was determined to have my life, the Captain and several others as often putting him aside. The Captain at last said, 'Come, we must be off, our haunt is known, and if we remain here we shall all be taken and hanged,' when Pietro Paulo again threatened to kill me, and the Captain said, 'Kill him if you dare, but you know the consequences.' Paulo then immediately rushed upon me with his knife, and but for the Captain and a few others I must have been killed on the spot. He was, however, overpowered, pushed out of the hut, and I never saw him again.

After this they all left the hut except the Captain and one or two others. The Captain said, 'I will take care you shall never see Pietro Paulo again, and now I repeat you are free and you shall be sent to Fondi immediately, but first you must clean yourself and shave' (which I had not done during my detention). 'I must have

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you,' said he, 'look as decent as possible in order to show you have been treated like a gentleman,' and he politely offered to act as barber for the occasion, which I declined. He then took leave of me very cordially, and I told him I should do all in my power to procure his pardon in return for his kindness and attention to me during my captivity. One other of the band shook hands with me, but the rest seemed sulky and disappointed. The Captain added, 'I will send the peasant who has been the messenger between us and the Government as a guide to take you to Fondi.' He then went off and I never saw him again.

The hut was occupied by a man and his wife, two other females and three children, and the Captain had scarcely left the place when they one and all crowded round me and congratulated me on my escape, and in a short time when they were quite certain that the Banditti had gone far away the scene which took place was almost indescribable. They all began to cry violently and the children commenced kissing me all over, while the others set to praying and thanking the Almighty that I had escaped out of the hands of the Banditti, giving me an account of several murders which they had committed, and the great hardships they had to endure from them. They said that they frequently entered their hut and consumed all they had, compelling them to act as messengers, and if they had any suspicion of treachery they never failed to murder.

At length the promised guide arrived. It was then dark and he wished me to remain at the hut an hour or more, but I was apprehensive that some scheme had been laid to murder me, and I insisted upon leaving at once. The inmates of the hut pressed me very much to remain until it was light. For my part I did not know what to do, I was quite perplexed and almost wished myself back again with the Banditti; in short, I was bewildered and could scarcely believe or realise what had taken place. However, I decided upon leaving as soon as I had washed and made myself tolerably decent, as the Captain of the Banditti had recommended. I had been with the band sixteen days, slept out of doors on the tops of the mountains every night and worn the same clothes the whole time, so I must have been in a sad plight. I had no sooner left than I wished to return. However, I proceeded for a short distance.

Our way lay over open mountains, occasionally passing similar huts to the one we had left, with lights to be seen in them; these were occupied by persons employed in watching large herds of pigs which were depasturing on the mountains. We then came to a deep lane hedged in on both sides and very narrow, such as you frequently

find in similar situations on the verge of the mountains in Wales. I had taken it into my head that my guide had been sent to get rid of me in some quiet way, and while on the mountains I had contrived to keep him at a distance, but when we entered the narrow lane and were obliged to walk side by side I took it into my head that he had brought me there to accomplish his purpose, and I did not know what to do. I was almost driven mad, and did not know whether to make him walk before me or behind me or on one side of me; all appeared to be equally objectionable, and yet I could not do without him as I had no idea where I was or in fact where I was going; in short I worked myself up into such a state that I scarcely knew what to do or what I was doing, so I resolved to take the first opportunity to rush at the fellow by surprise. This I did; I collared him, shook him well and made him strip himself to shew me that he had no arms, which he did, stripping himself to his skin (as they often carry their stiletos or knives inside their shirts), at the same time telling me he was only a poor 'Contadino,' was very sorry for me and very happy I had been released, that the Banditti had been very cruel to him and his family; and he shewed me his feet which, he said, were worn down to the bones by going backwards and forwards on my account. I told him I was sorry I could not do anything for him as I was the poorest of the poor.

Though I had given the fellow a good shaking I had not really hurt him, and after this scene we went on comfortably together and I was perfectly convinced that nothing sinister was intended. We then conversed as well as we could, and he told me several anecdotes of the Banditti. We had not, however, gone many miles before we came to a small cottage on the roadside in which he told me his brother lived, and he wanted me very much to turn in and remain there for a few hours as I could not possibly get into the town of Fondi so early in the morning. But I declined, thinking it better to proceed than run any risks, and so on we went, and at last we arrived before the gates of Fondi, which we found closed and locked, as my guide had told me would be the case. He then suggested that we should return to his brother's house, and wait for a short time. I did not know what to do. It was now about four o'clock A.M. or thereabouts, and the gates would not be open for some hours. It however occurred to me that after all I had heard it was not impossible that they were expecting me and were staying up, so I decided upon knocking at the door, and for that purpose I took up the largest stone I could and knocked with all my might at the gate, and almost immediately a gentleman put his head out of

a window in the tower above the gate and demanded who was there. I answered that it was the Englishman just returned from the mountains. He cried out, 'Oh, mon Dieu, je suis heureux! I will send to the Major Commandant,' and he added, 'I will be down immediately.' He descended in a few minutes, and the gates were scarcely opened before the same gentleman, as I suppose, fell upon my shoulder and kissed me, Italian fashion, over and over again, congratulating me upon my lucky escape. The guide entered with me and we were both taken into a very comfortable room where there were three or four more officers. Shortly after this the Major Commandant and Captain Verajo (who had been specially sent to procure my release) arrived and several others followed, all congratulating me upon my release, and with them we went to a coffee house, where I found several other persons sitting up expecting my arrival, from all of whom I received the greatest possible kindness and attention, with plenty of cake and wine, and I was shewn into a room where there was a fire and a warm bath all ready.

When I had made myself tolerably comfortable I returned to the coffee room, where I found tea and coffee and cold meat laid out for a large party. By this time the Mayor of the town and several other civil and military officers had arrived and we all sat down to a sumptuous breakfast. This over, I was taken to a public room and examined as to all that had occurred. I was asked to describe the persons of the Banditti and whether I knew their names, and the moment I mentioned the names of Antonio Mattei and Pietro Paulo, they all exclaimed, 'We thought you were with that party.' The examination over, we, that is Captain Verajo, the Duke de G—— and all the other civil and military officers who had been sent to Fondi to procure my release, set off on our way to Naples in four carriages and with an escort of thirty-six dragoons. We slept the first night at Mola di Gaeta, where a supply of linen was most kindly lent me by the young Prince de —— (the eldest son of the Sicilian Duke de Rocomano), who was then hunting there with the Hon. Mr. Cavendish, which I afterwards left at his palace at Naples.

The following day we continued our journey in the same manner, and in the evening (Christmas Eve, 1820) arrived in Naples, the whole journey having been performed at the expense of the Neapolitan Government. My friend, Captain Hemans, who had made every exertion in his power on my behalf, and had been almost daily expecting my arrival, met me a short distance out of Naples, and wished me very much to enter his carriage, but the gentlemen who were with me said that they were very sorry they could not

allow me to go with him, as they had faithfully promised to deliver me to the English authorities, so we drove to the residence of the English Ambassador, Sir William A'Court, but he was not in the house. They then drove to the residence of the British Consul, General Sir Henry Lushington, who was kind enough to come to the door to receive me, and in a few minutes Captain Hemans arrived and we walked away together to the Albergo di Santa Lucia, where Major Mahon resided and where he had rooms ready for my reception. I was now given to understand all that had been done by our Ambassador and our Consul and other English residents, as well as by the Neapolitan Government, to procure my release. It appears that after Major Mahon had reported the circumstances to our authorities at Naples, my capture became very generally known amongst the English residents, who, in consequence of the Revolution then going on, were very few in number. Many of the most influential of them had held a meeting, and amongst them Lord Ruthven, and nothing could have exceeded their generosity and anxiety for their countryman, money being offered to any amount to procure my release. Our Ambassador, however, thought it would be imprudent on account of other English travellers to send all at once, but to send the promised money and no more. The means by which my liberation was effected are singular enough, they show a government treating with a small band of robbers as if with an independent power. Major Mahon when he left me on the mountain reached Fondi without molestation under the escort of the peasant. He made his report to the police of the place and requested an escort to Naples. He was obliged to procure some money for his immediate expenses, and from the civil as well as military officials he met with every possible attention. At Fondi he found the same carriage and driver we had travelled with when we were taken, and also recovered his portmanteau, which had escaped the Banditti by being slung underneath the carriage, and in this carriage with the same driver he proceeded on to Naples. On the road the conduct of the driver aroused Mahon's suspicions, as he could not get him to proceed except at a very slow pace, the man stopping all the while without any apparent necessity, and as we had from the beginning suspected the fellow of having given the information to the brigands which caused our capture, Mahon felt sure that something wrong was intended. So having by this time provided himself with arms, he deprived the fellow of the reins and told him that the moment he saw the least sign of treachery he would instantly blow out his brains. In consequence, at the first



town they stopped at the scoundrel had Major Mahon brought before the magistrates and charged him with threatening to shoot him, but when Mahon had explained all the circumstances to them, they released him and allowed him to proceed on his journey. On his arrival at Naples he reported the circumstances to our Minister, Sir William A'Court (afterwards Lord Heytesbury), and was advised to return with the 100 louis as the only way of proceeding, having regard to safety. He did so, but finding, as I have related, that this did not satisfy the robbers, he again returned to Naples to take the advice of our Minister and Consul. The Minister then waited for the first time upon the Neapolitan Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Duke de G——. The Duke's advice was that to ensure me from the vengeance of the robbers, the Government should offer them a pardon and a sum of money to release me and deliver me safe at Naples. This communication was to be made through their wives and relations, who always knew where to find the robbers. If this measure failed, threats were to be employed and an armed force of 300 light troops was ordered to Fondi in immediate readiness to put these threats into execution by attacking the robbers, who were to be assured that when they were taken they would all be executed if any violence had been used towards me. They were likewise threatened with the destruction of their wives and families, and Captain Verajo, who was celebrated for his address and courage in similar affairs, as well as on other occasions, was immediately despatched to Fondi to put these instructions in force. The result was as I have related.

Of course I was more than happy to have escaped from the clutches of the Banditti and to find myself safely housed in splendid apartments in one of the best hotels in Naples. But having been robbed of all I had in money and clothes (except a Pope's penny which I afterwards found in the lining of my frock coat and which I now possess), and having torn up my letters of credit, while my friend was in much the same state, I began to think how I was to get on, and was not a little puzzled, as you may believe, how to raise the wind. I was ashamed to steal and could not borrow. However, it soon turned out that I need not have given myself so much pain or trouble. It was enough to be an Englishman; my countrymen, one and all, offered me their assistance; in short I had money almost forced upon me by several persons, and in particular by Lord Ruthven, who was ready to give me any sum. He called upon me the following morning and gave me a general invitation to his house so long as I remained in Naples, and Sir

Henry Lushington also called and told me that if I wanted money, as he supposed I must, I might use his name at any bank I chose to go to. This at once relieved me of all my money difficulties, and I went with some confidence to the bankers to whom I had letters of credit, which however I had torn up as before mentioned. But upon my showing myself I found that they had also received advices and were prepared to pay me any sum I might require without any assistance or security whatever, so I drew for £100, which they paid at once without any charge whatever, and in a day or two I received a letter from Messrs. Torlonia & Co. of Rome, to whom I had also letters of credit, to say that they had heard of my capture and begged I would draw on them for any sum I might want. So much for being an Englishman! This difficulty over I found myself tolerably comfortable, and though I had lived and slept in the open air on the tops of the mountains I was in the enjoyment of perfect health.

In consequence of the Revolution there were few English families in Naples that winter, except our Ambassador and Consul, who were both very kind and civil to me. I dined with them both, in particular several times with Sir Henry Lushington. On one occasion when I dined at our Ambassador's I met the representatives of several other countries, and was requested to bring my passport with me which had been signed by the captain of the brigands, and which I had already shewn to our own authorities. They all laughed heartily, and of course I was requested to tell my story, which I did, and they were all much amused. I was called upon by almost all the respectable English, the Admiral of the English Fleet then moored in the Bay, Sir Graham Moor, and Captains Shoulburgh, Pellew and others, and amongst them I found the card of Mr. R. Griffith, surgeon on board the Admiral's ship, who turned out to be a native of the Principality (Pwllheli) and whose sister had married Mr. Parry the druggist of Denbigh. When I returned his call a few days afterwards he took me all over the English and French fleets. I also found the card of a Baron Stulz, who was particularly kind and attentive and offered me any money I might require, and when I called upon him in return he insisted upon my accepting a parcel already neatly tied up, prefacing his offer by saying that no Englishman ever moves without a set of Indian silk handkerchiefs. These I politely refused, but he said, 'You can't get them in Naples and I shall send them, sir,' and sure enough on the following day I received the parcel with the Baron's compliments. The Baron turned out to be an old friend whom, though I did not know

him personally, I had employed professionally; he was no other than the celebrated Stulz, Houseman & Co. of Savile Row, London, merchant tailors, and an enthusiastic admirer of the English character.

Before returning, which I did by sea to Marseilles, I sent my passport to be 'viséd' for the purpose. It was first sent to the British Ambassador's office, when instead of signing it, they granted me a new one, upon the excuse that it was more than a year old; and this, though I particularly requested them not to do so, or, if they were obliged to do this, I entreated them to let me have the old one which had been signed by the Captain of the Banditti. Notwithstanding this I never succeeded in getting back the old passport, though I called upon Sir William A'Court and he accompanied me to the Ambassador's office, where the head person told us both that it had been torn up and thrown aside with many others. However, I afterwards ascertained that it had, in fact, been given up to the Neapolitan Government at their earnest request. The fact of its having been signed by the Captain of the Banditti being well known to the Neapolitan Secretary the Duke de G—— (who saw it at the party at Sir William A'Court's when I dined there and told my story) he no doubt considered it would be a reflection upon the Government of his country if it were allowed to be taken away, and for this reason he had got it into his hands and either destroyed or kept it. I was very sorry to lose this evidence of my capture as it would by this time have been a great curiosity.

The brigands after my departure still refused to surrender on the condition of enlisting in the National Guards, but required a full and free pardon and leave to return to their families. The negotiations between them and the Government ended by the Banditti being offered an asylum in a convent not far from Terracina to give them time to come to terms. They remained there some time and several proposals were made and refused by them. Ultimately the Banditti got tired and about the latter end of January or the beginning of February, 1821, they escaped from the convent and attacked the Military School at Terracina and succeeded in entering the building. When one of the monks belonging to the establishment attempted to ring the chapel bell in the hope of alarming the town and procuring assistance, the brigands killed him in the act, and then collected the students to the number of twenty-seven and marched them all off to the mountains except seven who contrived to escape on the road. Many of these were members of some of the first families in the kingdom and three of noble families, and the brigands demanded large ransoms, which the Government refused to pay. On that the

Banditti murdered one and cut off the ears of two others. Meantime the Austrians were approaching Naples and the country was thrown into great confusion, so that the Banditti were for the time forgotten and most of the young gentlemen were sacrificed. About this time, too, a Neapolitan baron was taken near his own door not far from Fondi and carried to the mountains.

The Banditti, however, were not long before they met with their deserts. The Austrians having taken Naples and placed the old King again upon the throne, the new Government, assisted by the Austrians, scoured the country for these and other banditti, and the band I was with was utterly destroyed. Colonel Sir Henry Brown, brother-in-law of Captain Hemans, lent me a book giving an account of their capture, with some plates and portraits, and I recognised that of Antonio Mattei, who was shot down from the top of a beam in an old barn.

The following are a few brigand anecdotes I heard related while I was staying at Naples. About two months before, the family of a certain Marchesa of Bologna whose name has escaped me, were taking an evening drive in an open carriage. One of the daughters, a very fine girl of thirteen years of age, was sitting next to her eldest brother, a young man in delicate health. They were merry, laughing and singing together, and the fineness of the weather induced them to go further into the country than usual. Suddenly a loud voice ordered them to stop, the coachman whipped up the horses and set them at a gallop, at the same instant a shot was fired, close by the side of the road. The horses continued at full speed, the little girl leaned her head against her brother's shoulder, and he concluded that she slept as it was too dark to distinguish the objects in the carriage, and before they reached home the night had closed in. On leaving the carriage the young man felt something wet upon his side and by the light of the torch he found it was blood. His companions on this, fancying that he was wounded, were busied in ascertaining the fact, and all their anxiety was awakened for him. The horses were taken to the stable and the carriage placed in the coach-house before the real victim was discovered. Some minutes had elapsed when, finding the young man unhurt, they began to inquire for the little girl. She was found in the bottom of the carriage, and they had scarcely taken her out when she expired; a ball had entered her forehead, and rendered instantly insensible she had fallen on her brother's shoulder without even uttering a sigh. Three ruffians were seized and convicted of being concerned in this affair and were ordered for execution. They belonged to the Frosinone band under Captain Tedeschi.

Again, in June last a party of brigands seized a gentleman of Frascati. They told him he must procure for them one hundred gold medals having the portrait of the Pope on one side, that they intended to wear them at all times by way of spiritual protection against all mischief and mischance. The gentleman was threatened with death if he refused compliance, and he was sent to Rome to negotiate the affair. He waited upon one of the Cardinals, who advised him to give the brigands a hundred louis to pacify them, with the assurance that the request for the medals was wholly impracticable. This was done.

A third story related to Lucien Bonaparte, the Emperor's brother, who had been interned in Shropshire during part of the war. He had a beautiful and splendid villa, the Villa Tusculana, not far from Frascati and near the ruins of ancient Tusculum. The gardens are laid out in imitation of the English style. Lucien took great delight in this place, and he made several interesting discoveries amongst the ruins, among the rest of an amphitheatre, which is called Cicero's School. One evening just at dusk a party of brigands rushed into the villa. Lucien, accompanied by his secretary and some of his family had been taking an evening walk. Lucien had reached the top of the stairs, the secretary was at the bottom; the brigands seized the secretary, supposing him to be Lucien, and hurried out of the house, and went away by obscure paths to the mountains above. Arrived at their haunt they began to talk of ransom, which they fixed at one hundred thousand crowns. 'But,' said the secretary, 'how am I to pay this, being only a poor painter attached to the family?' Satisfied in the end that they had missed Lucien, the chief insisted in the first place that to prove he was a painter the secretary should take his portrait. This he was luckily able to do, and with his pencil made a very satisfactory likeness. 'Now,' said the chief, 'you shall write a note to Lucien and tell him we demand twelve thousand crowns for your ransom, and desire he will send them immediately.' The secretary wrote the note, but when he had done so he found that he had inadvertently written it on the back of the portrait. He asked the chief what was to be done as he had no more paper. 'Oh,' said the chief, 'send the portrait. Lucien is a brave man and as such will be pleased to receive a portrait of a man equally brave with himself.' The portrait was sent and the ransom received, but the likeness was so good that it afterwards led to the discovery of the Captain and cost him his head. Lucien has never inhabited the villa since, and the excavations are no longer pursued.

## ASPHODELS—I.

### THE WELI OF SHEIKH NURAN.

BY MAJOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE MACMUNN,  
K.C.B., K.C.S.I., D.S.O.

As you travel through the low country by Beersheba, and among the hills of the Shepelah, or in the broken hills of the Negeb, you will notice many a small white dome and shrine, as indeed you will in most Moslem countries. They are usually the burial place of some departed saint or rogue, tended by some living hermit, who for a consideration will pray for your health and welfare, for an increase to your family, or whatever may be your dearest desire. These little shrines are known as 'Welis,' and in their heart of hearts the inhabitants know that there are far too many of them, and that far too many hermits and hangers-on of religion gain a parasitic living from them. And if you happen to know some village elder more than well, he may tell you his real opinion on the subject of Welis and their holy men. Or again he may not.

One that I knew well, instead of giving me his opinion in so many words, told me a story concerning a Weli, and a very good story it was. It is, too, a story which in different form but with identical motive will be told you perhaps in any priest- and shrine-ridden country. And it ran in this wise.

There lived once in the Shepelah a hermit who tended a popular wayside shrine, tending its lighted lamps in the alcove and praying for those who brought offerings thereto, living in a small mud and stone chamber hard by. Now the hermit had adopted a small orphan boy, whom he had found dropped by some caravan by the side of the road. The boy had lived happily with him, and had swept and tended his patron's hut, and had cooked and fetched and carried for him. But he daily grew in height and strength and hunger, as young men must. There was no doubt that he made a very considerable hole in the daily offerings of meal and pistachios and dried apricots that the faithful brought to their faithful hermit. And the hermit reflected that the profit of the lad's services and companionship did not counterbalance the cost of his keep.



So at last one day in spring when the young grass gave a shimmer to the country-side, and the crimson rose of Sharon sprang from under every stone by the wayside, the hermit summoned his disciple.

'My boy,' said he, 'you are growing up and will soon be a man. It is not right that an old man such as I should tie a young man to his side. The blood of youth and adventure is rising in you, and it is time that you should go forth into the world, and seek a better fortune than such as I can ever find you. You must away, and I have little enough to give you. You have your blanket, and here are a few pence, and I will give you as my parting gift this ass, which has grown up with you, and of which you are so fond.' And so, nothing loath, the young man laid his blanket on the ass and took the hermit's blessing and went his way to the coast and the Way of the Philistines.

He had travelled several stages, picking up such food as he could at the hands of kindly folk, sleeping by the roadside in his blanket, while the ass picked up its living as best it could, as asses happily are able to do where other beasts would die. But now a great calamity fell on him. One day, after they had journeyed a few miles, the ass lay down and refused to budge, and during the night died. The lad was disconsolate, but he could not leave the companion and playfellow of his youth to have its eyes picked from its head and its entrails torn out by the vulture and the raven. So with his brass drinking bowl the lad scraped a grave in the soft sand of the wayside and buried the ass. When his task was finished it was past high twelve and a great grief fell on him. His money was spent and his ass was dead and he was alone in the world. And he sat by the grave, his face buried in his hands. And after a while he heard a voice and he looked up. By him stood two men who had descended from a camel, and the elder, an Arab of some importance, said: 'My poor boy, you are very sad, and you must mourn for some dear relative or friend that you have buried here. You have all our sympathy. But it is not right to mourn for ever. Come, let us make a proposition to you. This is a district of some importance, yet we have no Weli. The relative that you have buried must evidently be a person of good repute or you would not mourn him so sorely.' And the lad still wept with his face in his hands, while the Arab went on. 'We will build a Weli over the grave of this friend of yours, and you shall be the hermit in charge and pray for those who pass by. Do you accept our proposal?'

The lad continued to weep, but at last looked up and bowed his head in acquiescence with the proposal of the worthy wayfarer. So it came about in a very few days the masons came with bricks and mortar and built a small shrine with a swelling dome and a niche for the lighted lamps, and a small square room near by for the hermit in charge to live in. And thus it was that Weli Sheikh Nuran arose in a district which for a wonder had been Weli-less. Now the young hermit in charge was a good-looking, well-spoken lad, versed too in the proper conduct that a hermit of a Weli should show towards his supporters, and he speedily became popular, and his fame spread abroad, since women must needs talk, and the shrine gained a reputation for working of cures and that prayers raised to the Almighty there were speedily answered.

After a while the fame of the new Weli came to the ears of the old hermit who had sent his young disciple out into the world, but who little expected to find that disciple as the new incumbent. Now a new shrine within marching distance of one already famous is not to be treated lightly, and the old hermit thought he would pay it a visit and find out what all the talk was about. So one day hiring a camel he set forth, and on the evening of the second day arrived at the Weli Sheikh Nuran.

As he dismounted and walked over towards the Weli, the young disciple saw his old master and rushed out to greet him, overjoyed. 'Welcome! he cried. 'Welcome! How delightful to see you after this long time! I have so much to hear and to tell you of.' But the old man demanded 'Whom have you got buried in that grave?'

'Oh, my dear protector,' said the lad, 'why bother about such things as that? It is time now to rest, while I prepare for you the evening meal, just as I used.' And the old man was led away, and his feet washed, and given curds, while the evening meal was a-cooking. But with the curds came persistence. 'Tell me now who is buried in that grave?' But the lad again refused to discuss it. 'Presently, father! presently. I have much to ask of you yet; you have not told me of the old Weli and all our friends there, and see, supper is ready.'

And since the smell of a cinnamon stew is well calculated to banish other subjects, the hermit acquiesced and set himself to enjoy his disciple's hospitality, as well he might, since Sheik Nuran folk saw to it that their protégé lived suitably and as a curer of sick had a right to live. But when the meal was over, and the two

sat smoking the pipe of contentment, and watched the evening star set over the Desert of Sinai, once again came the demand, 'Now I want to know who is buried in this grave by which you worship and read Al Qoran.'

'Father,' replied the young man, 'the hour is late and you have travelled far; let us sleep, and in the morning we will talk of important things.' Then once again the old man stifled his curiosity, and rolling himself in his blanket slept beside his disciple under the canopy of stars, in the peaceful Eastern evening.

But in the morning, rising at the voice of the bird, he remembered his demand. The young man, however, had been up before him, and stood beside him, laughing. 'Now, young man,' quoth he, 'are you going to tell me, without more ado, who it is that lies buried in this tomb?'

'Nay, father, that I will not do, unless you promise to tell me what I ask.'

'What is that, my son?'

'Ah! that I will not tell, but it is easily within your power, and unless you promise to answer the question that I shall ask you, I will not tell you who the holy man was that lies buried in my shrine.'

So overwhelmed was the old man with his desire to know, that he consented, and swore that he would do so. And then the lad told him the secret. The old man turned on him in fury. 'What!' said he, 'do you mean to tell me that you are imposing on all the good people of this district, those people who comforted you in your distress? How dare you humbug them with your grave of an ass? How dare you, in the name of God and His Prophet, work this imposture? How dare you shame my teaching? . . .' and here words failed him. The young man stood before him a trifle crestfallen, and then plucked up his courage.

'Father, no doubt I have done wrong. But now will you keep your promise to me? Who, I demand of you, lies buried in the tomb that you have tended all these years?' But it seemed that the old man heard him not. Again the lad persisted. 'Father, you promised. Again I demand of you, who lies buried in that shrine of yours?'

Then the hermit placed his hand on his disciple's shoulders 'Boy, I will tell you. It is the ass's mother!'

### DR. JOHNSON AND THE MODERN LANGUAGES.

'Does this not confirm old Meynell's observation, *for anything I see, foreigners are fools?*' burst out Johnson once at Old Slaughter's coffee-house, when a number of foreigners were talking loud about little matters. The remark and the scene contain in a nutshell the secret of the Doctor's attitude towards other nationalities. On the one hand we have John Bull incarnate, with his angles and prejudices and his incurable insularity, at a time when the social and intellectual life of England was probably in closer touch with the Continent than it has been ever before or since. He hated the Scotch, the French, the Dutch, and the Hanoverians, as Baretti put it. According to Sir Joshua Reynolds, his prejudice against the French was insurmountable, though he rather laughed at himself over it, and Mrs. Thrale says that it was well known to both peoples. When the Thrales took him on the famous trip to Paris, and they were visiting the theatre at Versailles, 'Now we are here, what shall we act, Mr. Johnson?' asked she. 'The Englishman in Paris?' 'No, no,' he replied. 'We will try to act Harry V.'

'But the prejudice did not extend to individuals,' adds Reynolds. He admits, indeed, that Johnson considered every foreigner a fool till he convinced him of the contrary. This is, however, characteristic of his attitude towards life in general. Long experience had made him sceptical and suspicious of everything new. Now a foreigner appeared to him much in the light of a new fact, the acceptance of which required an uncomfortable readjustment of his mental outlook. He was something strange and disturbing. He had habits that were quite unpardonable in Johnson's eyes. For one thing, he gesticulated, and Johnson could not endure gesticulation in company. 'Don't attitudinise!' he exclaimed to a gentleman who had dared to offend him in this respect, while he fairly seized and held down the arms of another who had been emphasising his arguments with his gestures. This tendency of foreigners, who at that time in London were generally French or Italians, to talk with their hands as well as with their tongues, doubtless increased his conviction that they must be fools, though he was ready enough to enforce his own arguments by stamping his foot.

On the other hand, the outburst at Old Slaughter's coffee-house

was an admission of his own deficiencies. With his strong social instincts Johnson must have been irritated beyond measure at being obliged to remain a passive spectator of the lively scene before him, to feel that these contemptible foreigners were excluding him from their society. It was, in fact, an outburst against his own inability to speak French, which he deeply regretted. For Johnson was always anxious to acquire a knowledge of modern languages, especially of French. Indeed, Hawkins had reason to believe that on first coming to town he frequented coffee-houses where foreigners congregated in the hope of picking up a conversational knowledge of the language, as Lockman, a prolific translator and writer of the earlier generation, had done. But he failed. For one thing, his deafness handicapped him. It troubled him in Paris. 'I will try to speak a little French,' he wrote. 'I tried hitherto but little, but I spoke sometimes. If I heard better, I suppose I should learn faster.' Possibly his want of success was also due to a common English failing, for Johnson was self-conscious and hated making a fool of himself.

While in France, Johnson was generally very resolute in speaking Latin. It was a maxim with him, Boswell tells us, that a man should not let himself down by talking in a language which he speaks imperfectly. When Sir Joshua Reynolds presented him to a Frenchman of great distinction at a dinner of the Royal Academy he would not deign to speak French, but talked Latin, though His Excellency did not understand it, owing possibly to Johnson's English pronunciation. Yet on another occasion he insisted on speaking French to a Frenchman of high rank who spoke English, 'because I think my French as good as his English,' as he afterwards explained.

Baretti, by the way, assures us that Johnson spoke Latin 'with all Cicero's fury,' while that celebrated foreigner, the Jesuit father Boscovich, who first introduced the Newtonian philosophy into Italy, expressed his astonishment, Boswell tells us, at Johnson's Latin conversation on both occasions when he dined with him. At the first interview between Johnson and General Paoli, the Corsican hero, 'when they met with a manly ease, mutually conscious of their own abilities and of the abilities of each other,' the General spoke Italian and Johnson English. They appear to have understood each other quite well, with a little assistance from Boswell, who compares himself to an isthmus joining two great continents. Johnson ventured on a few words of French, but,

finding he could not get on very well, he wrote down what he had to say.

With suitable opportunities in his younger days Johnson would doubtless have learnt to speak French easily. But he was essentially a scholar and he may not have possessed the ear of a really good linguist. He certainly had none for music. Unfortunately he was an old man when he went to Paris. He would never have been as cosmopolitan as Voltaire, nor could he, even if he had visited France when a young man, ever have given us anything like the '*Lettres Anglaises*,' for France was not a land waiting for discovery like England; but he would have been more receptive and open to new ideas and impressions.

Johnson was, however, a voracious reader of French literature. He delighted exceedingly in Boileau's works, says Mrs. Piozzi. 'Molière, I think, he had hardly sufficient taste of; and he used to condemn me for preferring La Bruyère to the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, who (he said) was the only gentleman writer who wrote like a professed author.'

The following conversation with the faithful Boswell during the tour in the Hebrides contains some of his views on French literature at that time:

"There is, perhaps, more knowledge circulated in the French language than in any other. There is more original knowledge in English."—"But the French (said I) have the art of accommodating literature."—Johnson: "Yes, sir; we have no such book as '*Moreri's Dictionary*.'"—Boswell: "Their '*Ana*' are good."—Johnson: "A few of them are good; but we have one book of that kind better than any of them: Selden's '*Table-Talk*.' As to original literature, the French have a couple of tragick poets who go round the world, Racine and Corneille, and one comick poet, Molière."—Boswell: "They have Fénelon."—Johnson: "Why, sir, *Telemachus* is pretty well."—Boswell: "And Voltaire, sir."—Johnson: "He has not stood his trial yet. And what makes Voltaire chiefly circulate is collection; such as his '*Universal History*.'"—Boswell: "What do you say to the Bishop of Meaux?"—Johnson. "Sir, nobody reads him." He would not allow Massillon and Bourdaloue to go round the world. In general, however, he gave the French much praise for their industry.

Of Italian literature Johnson also possessed some knowledge. He has left the story of his first introduction to Petrarch when a mere lad. He believed that his brother had hidden some apples



behind a large folio in his father's book-shop and climbed up to look for them. There were no apples, but the folio proved to be Petrarch, whom he had seen mentioned as one of the restorers of learning. So he sat down with avidity and read a great part of the volume, which was obviously one of Petrarch's Latin works.

In 1781, when seventy-two years of age, he notes, writing in the Thrales' summer-house at Streatham: 'Having prayed, I propose to employ the next six weeks upon the Italian language for my settled study.' This is not the only resolve of the kind, but from what we know of Johnson's procrastinating habits, we may be pardoned for doubting whether he observed it very strictly. And shortly before his death he wrote to Sastres, the language master: 'I have hope of standing the English winter and of seeing you and reading Petrarch at Bolt Court.' Baretti told Malone as an instance of Johnson's wonderful memory that, on his proposing to teach him Italian, doubtless in the early days of their friendship, they went over a few stanzas of Ariosto, and Johnson then grew weary. Some years later Baretti said he would give him another lesson, but added, 'I suppose you have forgotten what we read together before.' 'Who forgets, sir?' said Johnson, and immediately repeated three or four stanzas of the poem. Baretti characteristically took down the book to see if it had been recently opened, but found the leaves covered with dust.

Johnson refers to Baldassare Castiglione and Della Casa, among other Italian writers, and we find him taking the 'Palmerino d'Inghilterra' with him on a journey. He once begged General Paoli to repeat one of the introductory stanzas of Tasso's 'Jerusalem,' and when he had done so, Johnson found fault with the simile of sweetening the edge of a cup for a child being transferred from Lucretius to an epic poem. He also observed that it was remarkable that 'Pilgrim's Progress' begins very like the 'Divina Commedia.'

Boswell is of opinion that Johnson wrote French pretty well, and he refers to his letters in that language in Mrs. Piozzi's collection. But though Boswell was Secretary for Foreign Correspondence to the Royal Academy, an honorary post in which he succeeded his enemy, Baretti, himself, it must be confessed that Johnson's French is often faulty. Baretti has carefully put it right in his own copy, now in the British Museum. It must not be forgotten that Johnson is here writing without any idea of publication. When Baretti finds Johnson writing, 'There is always *une vuide affreuse*, as

Maintenon says,' he comments, 'I have some notion he wrote it right, and the ignorant woman made it wrong, thinking she was doing right.' But if we remember that certain passages in these very letters were, quite pardonably, the cause of Baretti's quarrel with Mrs. Piozzi, we shall not be inclined to suspect him of undue tenderness towards their fair editress. Many of the mistakes are obviously of Johnson's making, supposing the letters were correctly copied.

Baretti had, however, every reason for respecting Johnson's skill in writing French. 'Johnson never wrote to me French but when he translated for me the first paragraph of *Rasselas*,' he tells us. One day he admitted to Johnson that he could never satisfy himself in his attempts to translate it in the version which is still extant, though it has never been published. After thinking two or three minutes, Johnson said, 'Well, take up the pen, and if you can understand my pronunciation, I will see what I can do.' The result was highly satisfactory and was immediately adopted by Baretti.

Johnson was always eager to see other countries. 'He loved indeed the very act of travelling,' writes Mrs. Piozzi. '... He was in some respects an admirable companion on the road, as he piqued himself upon feeling no inconvenience, and on despising no accommodations.' Baretti, on the other hand, considered Johnson 'not fit to travel, as every place was equal to him. He mused as much on the road to Paris as he did in his garret in London. ...' But he was then an old man, though not too old to beat Baretti in a race in Paris when it came on to rain suddenly.

His judgments on the French confirm the fact that he started on his travels too late in life to alter his preconceived opinions. 'The French, sir, are a very silly people; they have no common life. Nothing but the two ends, Beggary and Nobility . . . no common sense, no common manners, no common learning, gross ignorance, or *les belles lettres*.' 'They are much behindhand, stupid, ignorant creatures.' A French horse-race at Fontainebleau distresses him as much as it was to distress Jorrocks half a century later. Everything was wrong—the heaviest weight on the weakest horse and all the jockeys wore the same colours. To sum up, France is worse than Scotland in everything but climate. 'Nature has done more for the French, but they have done less for themselves than the Scotch have done.' After this from Johnson, what more is there to be said?

Macaulay denounces Johnson as 'speaking of foreign travel with the fierce and boisterous contempt of ignorance,' a characteristically sweeping judgment which Birkbeck Hill devotes many pages to refuting. For Johnson was as eager for authentic information about foreign countries as he was for all other knowledge. He was particularly anxious that Spain should be travelled over, twice urging Baretti to perambulate it, and he was delighted with his account when it appeared.

Again, Johnson was bitterly disappointed when Thrale abandoned his plans for the Italian tour on the death of his last surviving son, though he was then sixty-seven. 'I perceived that he had so warmly cherished the hope of enjoying classical scenes, that he did not easily part with the scheme,' says Boswell. 'For he said, "I shall probably contrive to get to Italy some other way."' At the very end of his life, when his health was giving cause for serious anxiety, there was talk of sending him to Italy with Sastres, to whom he was then much attached. On one occasion Johnson remarked: 'A man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see. The great object of travelling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean. On these shores were the four great empires of the world. . . . Almost all that sets us above the savages comes from the Mediterranean.'

Yet Johnson would almost certainly have sympathised with a distinguished headmaster of the last generation who told the writer that he would not like to speak French well enough to run the risk of being taken for a Frenchman.

L. COLLISON-MORLEY.

*ELDORADO—WITH A GRAND CORROBORREE  
ACCOMPANIMENT.*

THERE is now no part of the world where the arm of the law does not reach, but there are still some odd corners where it is ineffective. Sometimes a wanderer stumbles into such a place and, after marvelling for a time why certain conditions are tolerated, concludes, often wrongly, that the law's representatives are not aware of the facts, and then promptly sets about breaking all laws that are irksome himself. The prospector, however, never sheds the white man's burden of responsibility, and the laws he ignores are invariably only those which conflict with the instinct of self-defence. One part of the world where the influence of the law is scarcely felt is that stretch of land which extends westward from the great range in the heart of Cape York Peninsula in North Queensland down to the mangrove-fringed shore of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

This shore line is known as 'Australia's Back Door,' and much happens there that is known only to the prospector. The entire Peninsula is a veritable treasure store, almost every known mineral having already been found there, and if any new mineral came into demand it is there that the writer would go to look for it, and he knows fairly well the nature of all the world's mineral fields.

There were eight of us suffering a period of inactivity, called a holiday, in Townsville. We had got tired of the well-known fields of North Queensland, as townships always grew up around our finds and railways had a habit of throwing out their tentacles after us, and we liked neither towns nor railways. One day, when the mercury in the thermometer seemed to be trying to get out at the top of the tube, the Professor said: 'I'm dead tired of this lazy life, boys; I've read all the latest books and all the last mail's papers from New York, London, Paris and Canton. I'll be forced to read those from Sydney and Melbourne if we stay here much longer.'

'What about going north to the Malay States or Burmah?' suggested Miserable Peter; 'I've never been in those parts.' The tear in his left eye gave his face an expression of sorrow which was misleading.

'No good,' Mac answered. 'There's nothing but tin in the

Straits Settlements, and big companies and Chinese have got it all in their hands already. How about Alaska ?

'Not for me, thank you,' smiled Lucky Jack; 'I've had enough of Nome and Dawson City.'

'I propose we have a shot at Rhodesia,' put in Boston Bob. 'That's the only place I don't know.'

'Too civilised,' negatived the Inventor Fellow. 'It's all deep-sinking there, and fancy Schools of Mines men from London run the country.'

'We might go back to New Guinea,' put in one who thought he was a poet and who was known by that title. Mac and the Inventor Fellow vetoed his proposal at once, for reasons best known to themselves, and the Professor turned to Silent Ted, the last member of the party, for the writer, to escape the use of the personal pronoun—and for other reasons—has hidden himself amongst those already mentioned.

Silent Ted spoke only on very rare occasions, and on being addressed directly by the Professor he slowly lit his pipe, and then, while we anxiously waited for words of wisdom, opened the *Townsville Herald* and pointed to a paragraph therein. It read :

'SENSATIONAL MINERAL FINDS IN THE PENINSULA.

'The Mitchell River Telegraph Station reports that a sensational find of gold has been made somewhere in the ranges on the Palmer Divide. The natives who brought the news cannot, or will not, give much information, but they say that large numbers of men are working the river beds. The specimens include some fair-sized nuggets, and it is surmised that the natives found them themselves as, notwithstanding their statement, no white men are known to be in the country. The natives of the district consist of the only war-like tribes now existing in Australia.'

'I guess the Professor should read the local papers sometimes as well as those from the little villages beyond the sea,' commented Boston Bob. 'The *Wyreema* sails for Cairns to-night, and we can get up the line from Cairns to Chillagoe on Friday, and outfit there.'

The matter was settled at once, and that night we shook the dust of hot, stuffy Townsville from our feet—it required some shaking—and sailed for Cairns, only a sixteen hours' journey north, en route for the Peninsula. We caught the Friday morning train according to schedule and, after climbing up over the coastal ranges,

through the spray of the mighty Barren Falls and out into the lime-bluff country, arrived in the mining metropolis of the north at night. We knew Chillagoe well, having left it only five weeks before, and by Saturday night had bought back our own horses and extra pack animals, stores, tools and explosives, and added two old comrades to our number—the Doctor and Wolfram Dick. The latter was known to local fame as being superior to Ananias, in his special line, but he was a first-class prospector, and a good fellow. We left Chillagoe that night, and rode fast in the brilliant starlight over a nor'west track we knew well, and by morning were beyond the Walsh River, and in country rich in mineral wealth and only partly prospected. We passed many old 'shows' some of us had previously worked and abandoned for no particular reason. Probably fortunes still lay at the bottom of the deserted, vegetation-overgrown shafts, but we were not interested in anything so near civilisation. The Unknown called and we were answering. We camped all day on Sunday and re-arranged our packs, which had been made up rather hurriedly, but at daylight on Monday started out again and forced the pace. We were still in the region of lime-bluffs, gaunt, bare, grey sentinels, honeycombed with caves, which rose from the surrounding sand to heights of about five hundred feet. All day we threaded our way amidst those inexplicable isolated hills, and occasionally we had some pangs of regret on passing gigantic 'blows' of copper carbonate, massive silver-lead (galena) formations, and promising quartz reefs in which molybdenite gleamed in large flakes. Game was plentiful although limited in variety, scrub turkeys too heavy to fly, squatter pigeons that would not fly except from the ground to the branch of a tree, and then from that branch back to the ground, and wild ducks being the chief items on our menu, although parrots of all kinds, kangaroos and emus were plentiful, and dingoes occasionally heard at night. It was glorious being once again wandering at will through untrodden country, knowing not what the next hour might disclose.

On the fourth day out we struck the Mitchell River, and camped for a day to fill in our maps with the locations of the chief 'shows' we had seen, and to assay some specimens taken from them. All those assays gave surprisingly good results, but the reefs from which they were picked are still awaiting our return. The Mitchell where we crossed, was a broad, swiftly flowing rocky stream, but a few hundred yards below our camp it contracted into a deep sullen waterway, teeming with hideous-looking fish and crocodiles.



During the next three days we were oftener out of the saddle than was good for progress, but we added another half hundred marks to our maps representing antimony, bismuth, copper, silver, gold, wolfram, molybdenite, platinum, and many other minerals. We were now leaving the lime-bluff belt and entering the region of foothills which formed numerous divides between the tributary streams of the Mitchell, chief of which was the Palmer River, but we had not as yet seen a trace of any human being.

One day, after crossing the Palmer, our direct nor'westerly course led us up a small stream into some higher mountains than we had previously seen. We had found 'good' gold in the sands of the creek and we had the idea that the promised land was not now far away. An approaching tropical rain-storm, however, made it wise to seek shelter in a large cave at the base of a solitary lime bluff that seemed to have been flung off from the main belt through which we had passed and, hastily gathering in timber and unloading our pack horses, we were comfortably camped in the cave when the storm burst. Silent Ted and the Professor set about preparing a meal that would make glad the heart of any prospector, the Inventor Fellow and the Poet lit candles and went off to see where a stream of clear water that flowed through the cave came from. Mac and another made war on the numerous bats and other winged creatures that challenged us for possession of the place, and Boston Bob and Lucky Jack, both Americans, became interested in some sand which filled irregular holes in the lime-stone bottom of the stream. The presence of the sand was certainly strange in a cave of pure limestone formation, but only the two Americans had noticed its significance. Miserable Peter sat on the floor and played rag-time tunes on his flute, the ever-present tears glistening in his weak eye meanwhile, and, generally, all found something to do. The cave was over a hundred feet in length, but its height was lost in the darkness overhead. The entrance was the stream's exit, and was large enough to allow our horses to pass in on either side of the sunken water channel. Of course it had been worn out by the action of water, but the firelight, playing on the enormous stalactites and stalagmites, cast weird flickering shadows beyond, which made it impossible to see how far it extended into the heart of the bluff.

In about half an hour the Inventor Fellow and the Poet returned, and reported that the water passage was cut right through to the other side, and that the stream actually flowed in from sources in a valley beyond, between our bluff and a mountain of ironstone.

'That accounts for this gold!' spoke Lucky Jack from a hole in the stream in which Boston Bob and he were working, stripped.

'What!' all cried. 'What gold?'

'The sand is full of it,' said Boston Bob, handing out his gold pan. 'That mountain on the other side must be like the Dome in Dawson City, and this sand and gold has been carried in from it. There is a fortune here.'

The pan showed a tail of gold comprised of small slugs and flour gold, and Lucky Jack's pan showed a similar result. Evidently we had 'struck it.' Ten men looked at each other in thoughtful silence until Silent Ted spoke. He had been lighting his pipe with a burning brand and, in his excitement, had thrown his pipe in the fire and placed the red ember in his mouth. He only said one word!

The Professor rubbed his glasses on his shirt sleeve, ejaculated, 'Dear me!' and removed a stew-pan from the fire to prevent its contents burning. The Poet began to declaim something, but the Inventor Fellow pushed him into the water before he got far. Miserable Peter dropped pearls from both eyes, and the Doctor began making calculations about cubic measurements which no one understood. Then Wolfram Dick began to tell his latest lie, and when he joined the Poet all the excitement was over and we squatted round the fire to attend to more pressing matters, for we were hungry. Outside, the lightning flashed, the thunder roared, and the rain fell as it only does on the Gulf slope. Inside, reigned peace, content, and the wonderful sensation of bodily comfort. Probably the storm raged all night, but one, at least, did not know, and in the morning it was gone and forgotten.

The next few days were strenuous but profitable. The Inventor Fellow blasted away the exit of the stream and thus drained all but one of the deep pools which held the auriferous sands. He then applied the powers of gelignite to a small waterfall over which the stream—now in full flood—rushed into the one pool left in the main part of the cave, and transformed it into a long inclined plane which he interrupted with roughly split slabs intended to catch and collect any gold brought in by the new flush of water. The Professor went out hunting, Ted attended to the cooking, and the others concentrated on getting gold.

'I wonder where the other fellows are working?' said the Doctor one night. 'My map shows that the overland telegraph station is only about twenty miles east from here, but we haven't seen a sign of man's work anywhere.'

Mac was working by candle-light in the bed of the stream at the time. The spate of waters had now ceased and only the normal stream was flowing. His shout drew attention away from an answer the Professor was making to the Doctor and all turned to him.

'There are more people near us than is good for our health,' the Scot who had never seen Scotland said, coming out from the water. (Mac hailed from New Zealand.) 'Look at this! I caught it floating past me.' He held aloft a small piece of pointed wood about four inches long; its surface was roughly tarred with shorthand-like marks and some symbols were also burned into the wood. 'It's a talking-stick,' he continued, handing it to Miserable Peter, who was an expert in matters pertaining to the aborigines.

Peter dried his eye and examined the stick. 'I can't read it,' he said after a bit, puzzledly. 'It doesn't use the signs of any tribe I ever knew in Australia.'

Silent Ted, likewise an authority on the natives, gave it up without a word, and the Inventor Fellow and Wolfram Dick were also unable to explain its meaning.

'Fine Australians you fellows are,' snorted the Poet.

'Oh, I can read some of it,' Wolfram Dick remarked airily, and we knew he was about to lie. 'It says a Grand Corroborree and——'

'Those symbols are Chinese characters, Dick,' the Professor reproved.

'Well, anyhow, there are people of some kind where it came from, and that must be somewhere up this stream,' Wolfram Dick replied, and his words could not be disputed.

Thus it was that we set out to investigate next morning. We ascended through the lime bluff, crossed the valley beyond, and finally ran the stream up to its split-up sources amidst a dense cluster of pandanus palms at the base of the mountain already reported on by several of our members.

'Some niggers have been here, at any rate,' Lucky Jack remarked as he picked up a broken spear lying amidst the palms. 'Hullo! here's a boomerang—and another—and—Christopher! there are dozens of broken spears here! There has been a fight!'

'Yes,' spoke the Doctor, 'and the men who were working here recently have probably been killed. What do you fellows make of this?' He picked up an old soft felt hat and a pair of trousers and displayed them, but by this time we were all finding evidences of a struggle, and were thinking many things.

'The mystery is solved, boys,' cried the Professor, who had entered a small gully, hidden from sight on the other side of the trees. 'Here is a deserted camp!'

We were by his side in a moment; there were several tents, erected in a manner that seemed somewhat odd to us, and two windowless bark huts surmounted by a shade of sandalwood branches. Scores of shallow holes in the bed of the creek marked the abandoned workings, and mining tools and cooking utensils were lying haphazard everywhere. There was nothing in any of the tents except some discarded garments, but a strange odour hung about them that caused the Professor and the Doctor to sniff suspiciously. The doors of the huts were nailed up, but Mac forced one open and went inside. He staggered back next moment.

'There's a horrible smell in there,' he gasped. 'Give me a candle.'

'Don't go in, Mac,' the Doctor advised; 'try the other house.'

But Silent Ted had already broken into the other house and had lit a match. 'Joss house!' he ejaculated, and clicked his jaws. And it was. A fantastically adorned and painted wooden idol of grotesque shape and appearance, and studded with pins, squatted on a rough wooden platform laid on a foundation of crushed ant beds. The odour of incense filled the apartment and some exquisite silk tapestry hung all round.

'It's a Chinkies' camp we've struck, right enough,' said Miserable Peter, weeping copiously. 'The aborigines must have killed the Chinks or they would have taken their Joss with them.'

'Maybe a plague of some kind chased them away,' suggested the Poet, and all shuddered and came out to the fresh air.

'They haven't been gone long, anyhow,' Boston Bob put in, 'I see a fire still burning.'

'Come away, boys,' the Doctor called, emerging from the first hut. 'Three dead Chinamen lie in here, boxed up in sandalwood coffins ready for sending home to China. How they can be sent home from here is more than I know, but as this is Australia's back door I suppose they'll return the way they came.'

'No one knows how Chinamen get smuggled into Australia,' Wolfram Dick volunteered; 'but they land somehow, on the shores of the Gulf, come up the rivers and live up here on a handful of rice until they get gold enough to carry them anywhere they like throughout the country. There are thousands of Chinese in the Gulf country not on any register, and who never paid poll-tax.' Dick was speaking the truth, as some of us were aware, but his reputation

was such that only those few paid any attention to what he said. Of course, all now knew that it was the fumes of opium we had detected in the tents.

We gave little heed to the workings in the creek. Our own camp was much safer if the natives were in a bad mood, and we got back through the lime bluff speedily, all very thoughtful. But the knowledge that natives were near was disconcerting, and we decided to locate them on the morrow. When night fell, the Inventor Fellow and Lucky Jack climbed up the outside of the bluff to get a view from the top, but they returned soon, to be laughed at by all for expecting to be able to see any distance in the dark. They said nothing then, but when the Professor and most others fell asleep they said to Mac and Silent Ted, 'We saw the fires of a native camp from the top of the bluff, and we are going out now for a closer inspection—'

'I'm coming, too,' broke in Mac; but they wouldn't hear of the idea and, having already artfully prevented him from warning the others by having taken him into their confidence—they knew Silent Ted would not speak—they felt free to indulge their tastes for adventure. Both were as fleet of foot as any aboriginal. They were the youngest couple of the party, and perhaps, as Mac told them, were not overburdened with sense. Mac and Ted, however, helped to blacken their skins with charcoal, and garbed only in shirts, to protect them, partly, from mosquitoes, and sandals taken from one of the Chinese tents, to preserve their feet, they raced off down the creek, carrying their revolvers and pipes in their shirt pockets. The moon was now full, the night was very hot, and sandflies and other night pests were out in full force, as they soon experienced.

When nearly two miles away from the cave they suddenly became aware—by the sense of smell—that some natives were near and, proceeding cautiously in the channel of the creek, they presently heard voices chattering excitedly, and next minute saw a party of gins (native women) clustered round a small fire on the creek bank.

'Those gins are supposed to be hiding,' the Inventor Fellow whispered to Lucky Jack, as they crawled past. 'There must be a big corroboree coming off.' Almost as he imparted the information the wailing sound of a ghingi-ghingi (a fluted wooden disc which when swung round the head at the end of a thong emits sounds of varying cadence) cut the air like a knife, and the

adventurers knew they were in for an exciting time if they did not retrace their steps.

But they did not, and soon the scrubby bush gave place to an open plain on which grew only one small patch of vegetation, well in front of them, and they could see, beyond it, a hazy circle of smoking fires. The pungent smoke hid what lay on the far side of the fires, but some odoriferous gins rushing past them as they wriggled forward gave them a fair idea.

'Any gin found within sound of the ghingi-ghingi is speared,' informed the Inventor Fellow, but his companion rudely told him to save his breath for original information. They had now reached the patch of scrub and were within a hundred feet of the smoke cloud, and crawling into the undergrowths of the 'quinine' trees and wild vine interlacements they waited. They now knew why they had not seen any natives previously. All had gathered for a grand corroboree, and while it was pending the natives would not show themselves, being chiefly engaged in chewing pidcherie (a peculiar pain-killing drug known only to the Australian aborigines) and sleeping. They had not long to wait. The smoke suddenly cleared away and disclosed a number of natives dressed in kangaroo and emu skins, running about inside a circle formed by about a hundred fires. They were throwing something on the fires which had the effect of driving off the smoke and causing them to burst into flames. One being, dressed in skins and feathers to resemble some fanciful demon of the aborigines' belief, stood in the centre of the fiery ring; spears, clubs and boomerangs lay around him and a ghingi-ghingi was in his hand. At a sign from the wizard-men or priests who were attending to the fires he began swinging the fateful disc and instantly, from the shadows on the other side of the fire, there bounded into the ring about two hundred natives, all with some pretence of being emus. They danced up to the great chief who represented the highest demon in their calendar and mimicked the actions of the emus, a crowd of the older blacks in the shadows making drum-like sounds by beating their bare bodies with their palms. The chief retreated before the young emu-warriors, then advanced while they retreated, and finally became a pivot round which they circled. Suddenly he ceased swinging the ghingi-ghingi and, with its wails, the dance ceased also. The hidden men in the undergrowths were well aware that the emu-dance was only a preliminary and patiently bore the combined attacks of the festive blood-sucking and stinging insects which



penetrated their shirts, explored underneath, and gorged on their bare nether limbs.

'I can't stand this much longer, old fellow,' Lucky Jack murmured. 'I'll never go about without my trousers again.'

'Maybe you'll soon be where I've heard asbestos trousers might be useful,' the Inventor Fellow grunted.

'Talking of asbestos,' began Lucky Jack, 'did you note the length of the fibres in that asbestos show we passed down near the Mitchell?' The shrieks of the ghingi-ghingi interrupted a reply, and both again fixed their eyes in front. The priests had thrown more of some powdery substance on the fires and they were now glowing red, but not flaming. The warriors had reformed into a long single line and, at a sign from a priest in the ring, they began a weird chant, and following the lead, walked straight into the fires and marched round in them. The chant was anything but musical, and the drum-sound accompaniment was the reverse of inspiring. But the performers were now undergoing the 'initiation to manhood' test of endurance, and those who passed would be fully fledged warriors. Those who did not—which meant those who had not been able to obtain sufficient pidcherie—would be deemed unfit to carry on the race, and treated accordingly by the priests. The Inventor Fellow had witnessed a grand corroboree in West Australia before, and knew what was coming, although it had been supposed by the authorities that there were no longer sufficient young aborigines in Australia to go through the highest rites of the Bora again.

Round and round circled the weird procession, keeping time to the ghingi-ghingi; the smell of scorching flesh permeated the air, but at times a whiff of burning pidcherie also was wafted to the hidden onlookers. Once or twice an unfortunate fire-walker fell out of the line and was immediately carried away by the priests. What happened to him was not seen and his yells were drowned by the other sounds. At length the chief's strength played out and the ghingi-ghingi fell from his hands. The marchers stopped, stepped clear of the trodden embers, listened to a speech from one of the priests exhorting them to be worthy of their ancestors and carry on a race that was old when other races of the world began, and, seizing clubs from a heap, rushed off to look for the special gins they had already chosen and whom they doubtless knew where to find. A blow from the club would complete the marriage ceremony. But all was not yet over. The priests now closed threateningly

round the chief, and the old men came from the shadows to watch. The chief picked up a nulla (a stout stick), and the priestly heads received blows which ought to have broken them. They shrieked and howled and the old men applauded, but they continued to press round the chief, and finally he was borne to the ground and pushed into a hole already dug. Without delay he was then covered up with scrub and some earth and the priests sang a song of victory which apparently told how they had saved the people from the demons represented by the chief. Some sort of reincarnation seemed to be due, however, and presently the old warriors arranged themselves into four parties and walked out in what was obviously meant to be, and probably was, north, south, east, and west directions, looking for something. One party almost rubbed against the scrub in which the two unbidden spectators were concealed. Those two were not feeling particularly happy just then.

For a time, how long neither knew, all was quiet, except for the distant shouts of the young warriors, and the priests sang another doleful chant which synchronised with the return of the four parties, who, seemingly, had been unsuccessful in their quest. But with triumphant yells the young warriors and their gins were now returning, and they asked the priests for their chief; and there could be no doubt about this demand, even had the Inventor Fellow not known most of what they said. With many signs expressive of sorrow, the priests told them they must find him for themselves as the old warriors had failed in their search. The young new warriors now began to wail—the stage management, prompting and acting were excellent—and began looking around. They soon saw the covered hole, and with yells of fear and some of delight they threw aside the covering and raised the chief, *in a peculiar manner*. This was the culminating part of the performance and, with frenzied shouts, men and gins went mad with joy. The chief discarded his adornments and stood forth and addressed them, telling how in the underworld he had conquered all sorts of devils and was now ready to lead his new warriors to fame beyond their dreams. The shouts again broke out and pandemonium reigned. The grand corroboree was over. There might never be another.

'I guess this is where we had better say good-bye,' said Lucky Jack. 'Those mad beggars will likely be looking for more Chinamen and won't have much hesitation about spearing white men if they come across them. I vote for home.'

And they went home at a speed that not many runners could

exceed. Mac and Silent Ted were waiting for them a hundred yards from the cave.

'Oh you heart-breaking sinners,' Mac reproached, after Ted and he had shown their joy at seeing them. 'We thought when we heard the ghingi that you had gone prospecting on the Long Trail. I had a fine epitaph made up, but now that you are back it is wasted——'

'Give a hand to clean our skins,' the Inventor Fellow interrupted abruptly, and after a plunge in the creek and the application of much friction by Mac and Ted the two black men regained their natural colour and all entered the cave and lay down amidst their sleeping comrades. It would soon be morning and they had not yet arranged a satisfactory tale to tell the Professor. When morning did come things were very unpleasant! . . .

During the next two days we kept inside and worked with our rifles at hand. We also called in our horses and fed them inside the cave. But nothing happened, and Wolfram Dick began to insinuate that some people in the camp whom he could mention had very vivid imaginations. He was jealous. On the third day we set our horses free again, calculating that the natives had gone further north in pursuit of Chinamen. That night we retired early and kept no guard, trusting for timely warning to a rope stretched across the cave's entrance which anyone entering would trip over and thus set in action an arrangement of horse bells which the Inventor Fellow had evolved. But our sleep *was* disturbed. Some time during the night all awoke simultaneously and sat up. A peculiar noise had aroused us and we could not determine what it was. It was like something sliding on a glazed surface, then a muffled sound as if some soft object was striking against an obstacle, and this was followed by a splash. The sounds were repeated several times, mystifying us completely. In the cave, sound was distorted and difficult to locate.

'I've got it!' at length Boston Bob exclaimed, gripping his rifle. 'It is niggers coming in by our back door and sliding down the Inventor Fellow's plane. The big riffle at the bottom is catching them, but their momentum jerks them over into the pool.'

'Come on, boys, but don't shoot unless in self-defence,' the Professor said quietly. 'I believe Bob is right.'

'I've often trapped gold on a bar across a sluice,' tearfully murmured Miserable Peter, 'but I never heard of that way of collecting niggers.' Before he had finished speaking we were round

the pool at the back of the cave. Boston Bob *had* guessed correctly. A number of partly garbed black-faced men were climbing out of the pool and more were tumbling in as they came down helplessly over the smooth limestone water-chute. They were grunting, but were otherwise unusually silent for pidcherie-mad aborigines. As fast as they emerged from the water a crack on the head with a rifle stock sent them back, but still they continued to come. Silent Ted lit a torch and, aided by its light, the strange fight proceeded. The invaders were surprisingly skilful, however, and when any got out of the pool and into grips with us, they ignored fearful punishment and seized tightly round our throats. They were small men, but we never dreamt aborigines possessed such strength. However, except for one man whom Mac had carried off to inspect more closely, they were eventually all back in the pool and we drew our revolvers and fired some shots over them. We had won. They could not now climb out without facing certain death.

'Come here, some of you,' cried Mac. 'My man is a Chinaman——!'

'Me telly eveltying if no' killy. Me give plenty muchee gold. Me telly tluth!——' gasped Mac's victim.

'Out with it, then!' ordered the Professor over his shoulder, 'and speak your own language, I understand it.'

While we herded the men in the pool the Chinaman began to speak and the Professor translated his words as he went on. They were in effect: 'We did not mean to hurt you. We wished only to frighten you away as we have done other prospectors. We wanted you to think it was the black fellows who attacked you so that they would be blamed when you reported the affair. We are always fighting with them. We are working rich gold up the creek. We sent the talking stick down the creek to frighten you, but when you came up to our camp we hid, thinking you would go away when you saw the plague we had amongst us. Ten of us are already dead. We will clear out if you let us go away, but if you do not you will die yourselves. Our fellows in camp will put our dead men in the creek and otherwise spread the plague if we do not come back——'

'Centipedes and corroborrees!' yelled Wolfram Dick. 'I don't mind pegging out, but I bar plague!'

'Let them go,' advised the Doctor. 'I think it's bubonic they've got.'

The Professor was silent for a moment, then he said 'Chase them away, boys; we are not executioners.'

They needed no chasing, and soon the cave was cleared of their pestilential presence. We went back to our sleeping place and held a council, but few spoke. Bubonic plague was in our minds. Some lit their pipes. Miserable Peter's tears fell like rain. 'White men don't take bubonic readily,' he said cheerfully.

Silent Ted opened his mouth, and all waited expectantly. 'Gold is no use to dead men,' he said; 'let's get back to Chillagoe.'

Before morning we were riding fast back over our tracks, leaving our tools and surplus stores untouched. We passed numbers of natives heading south and gave them tobacco. They told us that the big corroboree had been held to ward off the Chinese plague, but they were taking no risks. We reached Chillagoe exactly a month after we had left it and reported finding gold, but, for obvious reasons, said nothing else. Quarantine Island would mean the end of any prospector. There must be a lot of gold in the Chinamen's trap now.

ROBERT M. MACDONALD.

# AS THE WORLD WAGS.

BY A TAX PAYER.

THE CEDARS, STEFFNEY RISE,  
1. 1. 14.

MY DEAR MR. CANUTE,—A little bird, in the person of our mutual friend Goldhaufe, has whispered to me that you might be tempted to part with Heraldsmete. As it is exactly the sort of place I am looking for, I wonder whether we could not do a deal. Why not lunch with me one day at the Immensity Club, and then we could talk it over. Shall we say Thursday next at 1.30 p.m.?

Yours very sincerely,

HEINRICH WASSERFLUTH.

HERALDSMETE, SAXONBOROUGH.  
January 2nd, 1914.

DEAR SIR,—I do not recall any mutual acquaintance of the name you mention. In regard to Heraldsmete, my solicitors, Signit and Chargem, 21, Robes Walk, E.C., have the matter in hand. I regret that I cannot lunch with you on Thursday next.

Faithfully yours,

HARDY CANUTE.

Mr. H. WASSERFLUTH.

THE CEDARS, STEFFNEY RISE.  
6. 1. 14.

DEAR MR. CANUTE,—I have now seen Messrs. Signit and Chargem and I do not think we shall have any difficulty in coming to terms. But there are one or two minor points as to which I should appreciate the privilege of a personal interview. Perhaps you would be so kind as to suggest a time and place. I will suit myself entirely to your convenience.

I am, dear Mr. Canute,

Very truly yours,

H. WASSERFLUTH.



HERALDSMETE, SAXONBOROUGH.  
January 7th, 1914.

DEAR MR. WASSERFLUTH,—I thank you for your letter. I am glad that you have had a satisfactory interview with Signit and Chargem. I shall be in town next Wednesday and could meet you at their office at 3 p.m., if that would suit you.

Yours very truly,  
HARDY CANUTE.

IMMENSITY CLUB, S.W. 4.  
March 4th, 1914.

MY DEAR CANUTE,—Now that everything is fixed up I feel that I must send you a line. Heraldsmete has changed hands but I can assure you that it shall not suffer by the change. All that money can do shall be done, and I have considerable plans for its improvement—a new wing, for instance, and terraces on the east side. Some day you will, I hope, come down and see the result.

Yours sincerely,  
H. WASSERFLUTH.

ALLEGRO'S, STRAND.  
March 6th, 1914.

DEAR WASSERFLUTH,—I thank you for your kind letter. I wish you all success. Naturally it is a wrench leaving the old place after all these centuries, but I am glad to know that it is appreciated by the new owner.

Yours sincerely,  
HARDY CANUTE.

HOUNDSMEET, ROMANVILLE.  
Feb. 7th, 1919.

MY DEAR WATERFLOW,—I don't know whether you have heard of it, but I am shortly leaving this place, which I find too big for me. Hunting nowadays is too expensive for the "new poor," and I am moving to a nice little house in Berkshire where I shall, I hope, get some decent fishing.

The point of this letter, however, is this: It has occurred to me that some of my pictures might find their way back to Heraldsmete—a Vandyck, two Gainsboroughs, a Reynolds, and other portraits of departed Canutes, besides a few good examples of the Flemish and

Dutch schools. I shall really have no room for them in my new abode, and they *belong* in a way to the old place. If this idea appeals to you we might lunch one day, say at the Cyril, and talk it over. Let me know what day will suit you. I hear you are doing great things at Heraldsmete!

Yours very sincerely,

HARDY CANUTE.

HENRY WATERFLOW, Esq., O.B.E.

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HERALDSMETE,  
13. 2. 19.

DEAR CANUTE,—Sorry, too busy to lunch, but am sending Pictor, of Bond Street, down Friday next to view pictures. If he says they're all right I'll make an offer.

Yours truly,

H. WATERFLOW.

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WATERSMEET, DUTCH COPPICE.  
March 8th, 1924.

DEAR SIR HENRY,—I ought really to have written long ere this to congratulate you. It is the first time in its long history that Heraldsmete has had a title. I am sure you both deserve it. Now, to come to business. As I am shortly leaving this abode and am anxious to reduce some of my responsibilities, I have decided to get rid of the Canute jewels, some of which are not without historical interest, such as the ring presented to the tenth Hardy by Queen Elizabeth, the famous Georgiana necklace, and other pieces. It seems a pity that they should not go back to Heraldsmete, which has known them so long, and I would sooner you had them than anyone else. Do they interest you?

Yours very sincerely,

HARDY CANUTE.

SIR HENRY WATERFLOW, K.B.E.

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HERALDSMETE,  
14. 3. 24.

DEAR CANUTE,—All right. Send them up to Hammer and Knockout for a valuation. I'll phone them. But I'm not going to pay any fancy prices for second-hand history.

Yours, etc.

H. WATERFLOW.

ENDSMET, NEAR TAXING,  
May 18th, 1929.

MY DEAR SIR HENRY,—It is so long since we exchanged letters that I fear you must almost have forgotten my existence, especially since you have become so immersed in public affairs. But I have noted your doings with great interest. Heraldsmete has indeed fallen into active hands. But I suppose you are not there so much now, what with the claims of the House and your place in Scotland.

Well, what I *really* wanted to write about was a small collection of silver, a few tankards, salvers, and so on, which, in old days, were always in the Heraldsmete dining-room. I am moving again and shall not have room for the collection in my new house. The pieces all have the Canute crest and our motto 'Virtus sine Labore' on them. I should like to think they had a home in the old place. Perhaps you would like to buy them?

Yours sincerely,

HARDY CANUTE.

SIR H. WATERFLOW, Bart., M.P.

MULTIPLICITY COMPANY, LTD., PAUL MALL,  
May 20th, 1929.

HARDY CANUTE, Esq.

ENDSMET, NR. TAXING.

DEAR SIR,—I am instructed by Sir Henry Waterflow to acknowledge your letter, and to say that the dining-room at Heraldsmete now only contains gold plate, while he employs his own motto of 'Non sine Pulvere.' He thinks it possible, however, that the silver you mention might be useful in the servants' hall, if the price is adjusted accordingly. He suggests that you should send it here, when it shall be reported on by an expert.

Yours faithfully,

M. JONES,

Secretary.

TETHER END, RATEHAM,  
August 6th, 1931.

DEAR LORD RIVERSPATE,—Since you were kind enough to purchase those pieces of silver, the necessity has come upon me for another house move, and with it an opportunity for dispensing with a few old books which used to be in the library at Heraldsmete.

There are some first editions of Surtees, Scrope, and other well-known sporting writers. The Canute bookplate with our motto 'Virtus sine Labore' is in each. I wonder if I could tempt you to make an offer?

I am, my lord,

Yours sincerely,

HARDY CANUTE.

H. CANUTE, Esq.,  
TETHER END, RATEHAM.

PIBROCH CASTLE, N.B.,  
August 14th, 1931.

DEAR SIR,—The Earl of Riverspate desires me to say that he has received your letter, forwarded here from Heraldsmete, and that he is not in need of the books you mention. He has complete libraries of all the best authors in the best editions in each of his houses.

Yours faithfully,

ALICIA DE TONNERRE (Lady),  
Secretary.

LADY ALICIA DE TONNERRE,  
PIBROCH CASTLE, N.B.

99, QUEER ST., OWINGHAM.  
April 10th, 1934.

MADAM,—I wonder if I might enlist your aid in a certain matter. I hardly like to trouble Lord Riverspate, as I know how busy he is. The fact is, I hear that there is a vacancy for an agent on his estate at Heraldsmete and I should much like to apply for the situation. I have, as you may have heard, had some connection with the place and I could, I am sure, give satisfaction. My age (67) may be somewhat against me, but my knowledge of the estate ought to be a recommendation. If you could put the application before his Lordship I should be deeply grateful.

Yours sincerely,

HARDY CANUTE.

MR. H. CANUTE,  
99, QUEER STREET, OWINGHAM.

PIBROCH CASTLE, N.B.,  
April 24th, 1934.

SIR,—Your letter to Lady Alicia de Tonnerre (now de Goldhill) was forwarded to her at Monte Carlo and has been sent by her to me. She, of course, gave up her secretaryship on her marriage six months

ago. I fear it is of no use to place your application before his Lordship as the post is filled up. His Lordship prefers to have titled people in his employ and Viscount Hengist is now agent at Heraldsmete.

Yours faithfully,

MARMADUKE BEAUTRAVERS,

Baronet.

From the *Morning Helio*, Oct. 7th, 1938.

[ADDRESSED TO A DUKE.]

The body of an elderly man dressed in rags was discovered in a ditch near Ovingham on Monday, not far from Paidwell Hall, a shooting box of the Duke of Pibroch. The deceased, who seemed to have died from underfeeding and exposure, was known to some of the inhabitants of the district by the name of Hardnut, and is described as an amiable but eccentric individual who never did any work and seemed to have something on his mind. It is supposed that he once knew better days.

The curious thing about the discovery is that the dead man's right hand clutched a letter addressed to the Duke of Pibroch. Our representative was fortunate enough to get a word with his Grace (who was, it will be remembered, known a few years ago as Lord Riverspate) on the steps of the Best Hundred Club. His Grace thinks that the deceased may be a man from whom he has made certain purchases in the past, but cannot imagine on what subject he could have wished to write to him now.

Doubtless the mystery will be cleared up at the inquest, which is fixed for to-morrow at Ovingham.

### A MID-VICTORIAN PREP. SCHOOL—1869-1871.

HOWEVER known officially to our parents and guardians, to us small boys the Headmaster of Julians was always and only 'Teddie.'

'Teddie has been terribly baitey lately,' wrote one young gentleman home to his father. '*Send him some game.*' Heavily underlined.

Very properly, the shocked butler carried the communication to his master for instructions. It was the early days of postcards, and the servants always read them, both going and coming. But ought it to be sent? 'Sent?' cried the delighted Teddie, 'of course it ought!' And no doubt in due time the placatory pheasants arrived. Years afterwards it was Teddie himself with many chuckles who told me the story, but never the name of the ingenious young gentleman-author of the postcard.

Nowadays successfully to start a preparatory school it is as well—indeed one may almost say it is imperative—to be a *Blue*. Once a *Blue*, after a certain amount of private tutoring and with a degree of sorts, the start may perhaps be made with some half a dozen boarders; promise-crammed no doubt with many more—the nephews and the sons to be of old athletic pals. For scholarship purposes, of necessity there is a partner, who took at any rate a first in Mods. As a rule the partner is no athlete, rides an old push bicycle and joins in no games, unless the standing umpire for the second eleven, a mountain of discarded sweaters, may be so considered; a position in which his decisions are apt at times to be remarkable. Success can be reckoned fully achieved once the thirtieth boy mark has been passed; below that number there will always be a struggle to keep going; above it (so I have been assured by an eminent private school headmaster) two-thirds of the surplus may be entered as pure profit. Finally, except for the usual troubles with influenza and measles in the Easter term there remains only the menace of the parents to be dealt with; unknown to us at Julians, but an increasing nuisance in these days of swift and unprovoked descent in the motor car. Fortunately of them in all England there would appear to be mainly only two: the Father, who doesn't so much care (or often at all, and for so-called social reasons!) about the boy trying for a scholarship, but



would be relieved to hear that he doesn't funk at football; the Mother, who hopes Mr. Blue will never forget how 'highly strung' her precious one is. When I consider the stolid countenances of the youth of Britain and the enormous proportion of the owners of them who are so 'highly strung,' I feel confident that the fond diagnosis must in the main be gravely at fault.

But our Headmaster of 1869 was no Blue, nor had he even been at the University. Somewhere he must have been educated, but I have no idea where; certainly not at any public school. Early in the 'fifties he had started as a private tutor, and encouraged by the parents had opened in Harrow town a small day school, situate and held, oddly enough, on the boards that enclosed what had once been a public swimming bath. Thence he ere long migrated to the house at the top of the London hill, on to which he was soon forced to build dormitories and a large pupil room at the back, to accommodate the forty or fifty of us who in 1869 were his boarders. But the classes were all held at Julians, the farm attached to the large house built by Anthony Trollope's father, a mansion that unlucky odd-tempered Chancery barrister had speedily to abandon as a residence for the farm. Later it was always known as 'Orley Farm,' the name assumed by Teddie from the day when he chanced to buy a number of the novel on the bookstall at Euston and to his astonishment recognised from the lovely drawing on the frontispiece by Millais a possession of his own. There the staff slept, and up the long drive that led to it we boarders trudged to early morning lessons, not infrequently chasing before us such of the day boys as were small enough to be harried. An excusable form of exercise on frosty mornings in the winter, to be checked only by the good Teddie hurrying up to school behind us, always in a tall hat and with a plaid wrapped round him, Scotch shepherdwise, and a fold of it drawn protectively over his capacious mouth.

It must be confessed that luxuriously as we were fed and admirably as we were otherwise looked after and cared for, the teaching at Julians was by no means on the level of the preparatory school of to-day. I never heard of the gaining of any scholarship, not even of anybody ever trying for one, while loafing about among us there were a certain number of overgrown youths who had tried again and again to pass into a public school and were as often being returned to Teddie's further care—thrown back on his hands, in short—simply because their parents had no idea what else to do with them. One of them in particular, the Honble.

E—— K——, who always seemed to me old enough to have a school of his own, had so persistently failed to pass the entrance examination into Harrow that he considered his education there and then complete and was never again known to open a book. Indeed, how could he, seeing that his hands were never out of his trousers pockets? No doubt our masters were on the whole rather a scratch lot, what old Indians call 'a bobbery pack,' or at least would nowadays be so considered. Teddie himself was popularly believed always to have the 'crib' beside him, even when presiding over Cæsar; why else should he drop his handkerchief, as he invariably did, when one went up to his desk with a difficulty? Why, indeed, unless to hide the open 'crib'?

As for the French master, a heavily whiskered Gaul whose visiting-card we were occasionally allowed mysteriously and as a favour to inspect, emblazoned with a skinny and foreign-looking coronet and inscribed, '*Baron de N——*,' I can only remember him as the architect and builder of our cricket pavilion, a mere cattle-shed of timber, most of which the bold Baron himself carried on his broad back down the slope from Julians to the cricket field. He more than once told us he had been in the cavalry at Solferino; and on one occasion, on being obstructed innocently enough by one of us anxious only to assist him, he dropped the timber and in a burst of Gaulish fury bellowed that had he then had with him the sword with which on that day of glory he had led the charge that won it, he would most assuredly have sliced the young offender's head off. I can still feel and shiver at the blank and petrified silence that followed that overwhelming pronouncement; as it were the shocked silence of nature, after some terrific solitary unheralded peal of thunder on a quiet winter's afternoon. And always I see and hear him, even to-day, sawing and measuring and trying to fit the timber where it never would go, swearing great *jurons*; never do I see him in form, never that I can remember did he teach me one word of French.

When at the end of the December term we young gentlemen enacted the trial scene from the '*Merchant of Venice*' in the old tar-bedaubed farm barn that was our racquet court, the Baron was an impressive, if slightly incomprehensible Doge.

'*Shylogue*,' he growled to the Honble. E—— K——, busily engaged in sharpening a large knife on the sole of his boot, '*De world tink and I tink so, too*'—though what he did '*tink*,' even down to the last line of his long opening speech—

'*Ve all eggpeck a chentle answer, Chew!*'—

must have been more or less of a puzzle to the long-suffering kind friends in front.

Some years later I chanced to hear that the Baron-Doge had married a well-to-do widow, won to his side no doubt by the recital of his deathless deeds against the Austrians at Solferino in 1859. It can scarcely have been by his Shakespearean effort of just ten years later, even supposing the lady to have been present.

The best and assuredly the best beloved of the staff was Dicky Richards, an old Marlborough boy, who taught us cricket, most of which teaching—'*block vicious—run your first run sharp—speak in passing*'—I remember and till quite lately practised, and at odd times something about the stars, all of which I have long ago forgotten. In other departments of learning, mainly the classics, his chief weapon of instruction was a long and flexible vulcanite paper knife, which when smartly applied to the funny bone helped to correct our many errors in Latin verse. His pleasant bow-windowed room with its creeper-covered balcony on the first floor, as in Millais' drawing, looked far and wide over the Middlesex fields towards London, and I well remember his telling us that it was while seated there one evening in March, 1856, he could distinctly hear the cheering in Hyde Park (some seven or eight miles away as the crow flies, ten by road) for the Crimean peace. I suppose it is just possible, but I confess I have never yet found a believer. *Credo*, because it was dear old Dicky Richards who said it. He was a considerable student of the Franco-Prussian War, which during the autumn and winter of 1870-71 was then still raging, and perhaps preferring it as a study (at any rate for himself) to anything Greek or Roman, led us with infinite care through the whole campaign from its inception, even drawing us plans on the blackboard of the principal battles. It was by being violently Prussian, I may mention, that we began; but we ended Franco-phile, because, as Dicky said, the French were 'fighting for their homes.' I can hear him now affectionately calling me a 'good boy' when, on the form being appealed to, I alone pointed out—what of course as exhibited on the blackboard was perfectly obvious—that the position of the French at Bazeilles during the great Sedan battle was a bad one, seeing that it brought them into a salient and was therefore between two fires. In short, whatever my deficiencies in the classics, I believe I could even to-day with some credit pass an examination in the Franco-Prussian War.

Dear old Dicky Richards!—let me give myself the pleasure of once more so calling him—he had the kindest, sweetest eyes I

ever saw in a human head. It is many, many years since he died, of rapid consumption, but I can still very clearly see him starting out for his afternoon walk with his faithful retriever. He looks very like one of John Leech's well-bred gentlemen, in dress and face and figure, and always he walks rapidly, hurriedly, as though trying to outdistance the disease which even then he must have known was so cruelly dogging his footsteps. He had a very sweet, slightly vibrating tenor voice, and at the end of term would sometimes sing us a song, always the same, something about an oak—'a brave old English oak, boys!' He died when I was far away from England, on the other side of the world. I wish I knew where he lies buried; one at least of his old pupils would see his grave kept always green. His name was George, George Richards, but I never heard him called anything but Dicky.

One other of the staff I still very vividly remember, our poor Mr. W——. He was remarkably handsome, tall and broad-shouldered and, to my young eyes, the very image of Apollo. In later years Teddie told me he came of a fine old Northumbrian stock, large landowners and country gentlemen, ruined by some unhappy speculation, whereby he, the only living representative, had been forced to gain his livelihood as best he could by teaching. Always with us he was extremely dignified and grave; the only time I ever saw him obviously amused was once at cricket, when, bowling a slow and steady underhand, he went halfway down the pitch to field it and held a half volley hit by our mighty swiper, Wallis (one of the overgrowns), straight back at his face. The grave features dissolved into a kind of stately, silent, Olympian mirth, chiefly at the scowls and mutterings of Master Wallis, retiring in schoolboy dudgeon to the Baron's newly erected pavilion. An accomplished athlete and boxer, on the days when the instructor came from London for our gymnasium drill he always indulged us, and him, in a fierce and prolonged bout with the gloves. As a rule the advantage lay with the master, who could keep his temper better and whose condition was superior, since he neither smoked nor had the London man's delight in beer. It was in one of them that I suppose he must have overstrained himself, done himself some internal injury from which to-day surgery would probably have readily relieved him. But more than fifty years ago there was no such certain skill, not near at hand at any rate, and after some few days of prolonged suffering it was death, perhaps a welcome death, alone that set him free. I can still see the huge swaying coffin, too big to be carried down the narrow stairs of

Julians, swinging out of the dead man's bedroom window like some strange dark merchandise being lowered from a city warehouse. Northwards he was carried, to lie in the churchyard that holds so many of his forbears, himself the last of his race.

With scarcely an exception, the staff of masters was constantly a fluctuating one. Where Teddie can have found them I can't imagine, unless in some poorly equipped scholastic agency of that day. Julians was justly considered one of the best private schools in the country, as it was certainly one of the most expensive, yet not one of the masters held a university degree and only one, dear Dicky Richards, was an old public school man. One newcomer, bearded and somnolent, chiefly memorable for playing cricket with us in his braces, scarcely survived his first term, truly 'a transient and embarrassed phantom'; while of another, a stout ruddy-faced man with red hair, who for a short time taught us mathematics, the only recollection I have is still and deservedly very painful to me. For ever he stands facing me by the black-board, holding a piece of chalk, glaring at me heatedly, clearly despising me. I have just fired at him some foolish, totally unnecessary question, trying as we say now, though never said then, to pull his leg. 'Surely you knew that?' he asks me contemptuously, to which with a touch of injured innocence I answer a brazen, wholly untruthful, 'No, sir, I didn't.' And to their credit the whole form instantly yells at me in disapprobation; a loud, almost a furious 'Oh!' from the echo of which I have never yet been able to escape. Most schoolboys at times tell lies, but they must be lies with a definite, recognisable, more or less approved purpose, of what we may call a duly registered pattern. Outside that pale, as mine was, they are generally and very properly greeted, as indeed mine was, with a howl of execration.

If since then on my way through life my lies have been fewer than they otherwise might, or doubtless would have been, the reduction I believe to be due to the shame I felt that summer morning at Julians, a shame I feel even to-day as I record it, more than fifty years later.

One of the most potent arguments, if any such were further needed, in favour of the most rigid truth telling might well be gathered, and stocked for future use, from the consideration of the adventure which, sometime in the early 'thirties, befell the father of one of my fellow pupils at Julians. His name was M——, of a well-known Derbyshire family; he had himself been at Harrow under Dr. Longley, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, and one

day while idly strolling near the school bathing-place he went to the assistance of an elderly man on a cob, vainly trying to unfasten the hasp of a gate with the handle of his whip. Master M—not only opened the gate for him but politely held it to allow him to pass, an unusual attention from a Harrow boy of that date to a Middlesex farmer, a class with which the school was for the most part bitterly at war. ‘Thank you, my boy,’ the farmer nodded. ‘Much obliged to you.’ Then he pulled up his cob and asked him his name, to which the young gentleman was so ill-advised as to reply that his name was Smith—Edward Corker Smith. ‘Edward Corker Smith, eh?’ the farmer repeated. ‘And what does your father do?’ ‘My father, sir? My father keeps a large cheesemonger’s shop in the City road. Fine shop, sir; you ought to get your cheese there.’ ‘I’ll think it over,’ said the farmer. ‘Anyway, I’ll not forget you.’ And so with salutations, on the boy’s part mostly of the mocking description, they parted.

Some years later the boy, now grown a man, and delighted as most men to hear of an unexpected legacy, chanced to see a *Times* advertisement, notifying a Harrow boy of the name of Edward Corker Smith, son of a cheesemonger in the City road, that if he applied to certain solicitors he would hear of something to his advantage.

‘That means me, my dear,’ cried Mr. M—to his wife. ‘You see how politeness is never wasted. I wonder how much the old beggar’s left me!’ And to the solicitors he went light-heartedly and in full detail told his story. ‘But what a pity,’ said the solicitor, when at last he had finished and held out his hand as it were for the legacy, ‘*what* a pity you gave a false name and a false description of your father! You tell me your real name is M—and that you now live on the estate in Derbyshire your father was at that time actually in possession of. That unfortunate misstatement of yours, sir, has cost you just about £7,000. *Good morning to you!*’

In the stock phrase comment is needless, but I must say I should like to have heard and recorded Mr. M——’s as he left the solicitor’s office, if indeed it were fit for publication.

At Julians the great majority of us were destined for Harrow; in fact I can remember only two young gentlemen, brothers, who were on their way to Eton. Our attitude towards them was at least meant to be correct; they were neither bullied nor even teased, but we treated them with a grave exaggerated courtesy, a studied tenderness for a misfortune they could not themselves



help—much as if either had been afflicted with lameness, or a cleft palate—which must surely have been highly exasperating. Poor beggars, we said to ourselves, it's their people's fault, not theirs, and we must do our best to make them forget it. So gentle, so forbearing, so insistent was our handling that we pictured them having at last the sense to yield to it, and with many tears entreating their parents to reconsider so unhappy a decision. In case of success we did in fact promise to do all we could for them and never let it be publicly known that they had once been destined for so obviously inferior a place of education to ours. But either they were satisfied with their deplorable position, or their parents were adamant, for to Eton they most certainly went. One of them I met some few years back in Albemarle Street, looking at me over his high collar just as he used to look at Julians when we courteously pointed out the lifelong injury he did to himself by not coming with us to Harrow. We were civil enough always to believe, by the way, what indeed was by no means certain, that he could at least have passed the entrance examination.

I suppose that every boy has his schoolboy hero, and I certainly had mine. Indeed, at Julians I had two. Of the first I need say little, except that in person and manner he was Steerforth incarnate, as handsome, as brilliant and as engaging, with moreover an endowment as athlete I have never known equalled. He was in the Harrow cricket eleven of 1873, with the late Lord Long and the present Desborough, known to us then as Billy Grenfell; an eleven which, with the help of the famous bowler, F. L. Shand, who while still a schoolboy bowled for the Gentlemen, very easily defeated Eton; he was, of course, in the football eleven, and twice he helped win the Public Schools Racquet Cup, in 1873-74, schoolboy triumphs which would no doubt have been repeated at the University had he been sent there. But presumably he was wanted in the business at Liverpool, where his father was one of the great shipowners, a very remarkable man who, I believe, began by sweeping out the office he afterwards owned, and for thirty years I quite lost sight of him. Not until the summer of 1903, when after ten years of failure Eton at last and very easily won the match again, did I once more see him at Lords; see, but entirely fail to recognise him. Perhaps if Steerforth had lived, David Copperfield might have felt as I did, that of his schoolboy hero time and what is called life had not left him one discernible trait.

My second object of worship had been at Julians two or three years before I went there, and as an old pupil used to bring us an

eleven from the big school for an annual match. Need I say more to explain my grateful adoration than that if ever we met in the town he used always to recognise, smile and nod to me? He was the son of a Chancery barrister living at Harrow and would undoubtedly have been in the 1871 cricket eleven. Then late one June evening the appalling news reached us at Julians that while standing umpire in the sixth form game he had been struck behind the ear by a square-leg hit and instantly killed. That was on a Saturday afternoon, and early on the Sunday morning I had to cross the school cricket ground on my way out to breakfast with friends of my people at Dudley Lodge. Shall I ever forget the sight? There were the stumps still in the ground, the open pavilion, the score left hanging on the board, all as at the actual moment of the tragedy. Death had swooped down and stopped the game, and to me seemed to be still standing there on guard, forbidding the removal of the very implements of his terrible decree. So only could he bring home to us, young and old, his dread imminence. And even to-day in Harrow town I can fancy myself greeted with the bright smile, the kind and gracious nod on the very spot where I last saw my hero, and the next moment there comes before me the vision on that lovely June Sunday morning of the deserted cricket ground, the stumps still upright, the open pavilion, and again I hear the mournful heavy tolling of the school bell.

Let me finally add that of my many fellow pupils at my Prep. School I have in later life met with very few and now never seem to meet with any. What became of the overgrown youths I have already referred to, I have no idea. Of them I have never met one, though I need not suppose that failure to pass the entrance examination into Harrow necessarily meant complete failure in life generally. Many of their names I remember and all of their faces, but since the September of 1871, when I entered the big school, I have never encountered them. One at any rate I should know and instantly recognise, a stout youth named Hay. I can see him at this moment running towards me from out of the room next the kitchen at Julians where we kept our bats and pads and stumps. He has a paper in his hand, and as captain of the eleven bellows joyously, 'Frith, you may get your cap and belt!' And that cap and belt, as M. Prudhomme declared of the sabre presented to him, was and still is '*le plus beau jour de ma vie!*'

WALTER FRITH.

# HALF-LIGHT.

BY N. M. GUNN.

## I.

'WHERE the half-sphered scabious nod in a purple mist.' The words were pencilled on a scrap of an old envelope as though jotted down hastily or in semi-darkness, and represented the only writing of any sort found in his clothes. But to me the words represented—what?

I could not answer. They haunted me with the persistence of inexplicable but portentous meanings. Haunted me more uneasily than ever when, after an absence of some years, I got caught again in the half-light which comes to that grey northern land when the sun has died finally beyond the distant headland, the crouching headland which shuts off half the Western world and broods on the sea. There is a quality in this half-light that is at once a folding of wings and an awareness. Colour intensifies, 'runs,' so that the ditchside of tall kingcups at hand becomes a deep still flame of gold, and the field of 'half-sphered scabious' beyond the bank swoons in a veritable rapture of 'purple mist.' Into the silence creeps gradually a listening stillness. The bleating of a sheep or far barking of a dog dies out in ears that continue to hear the echoing forlornness. Upon the body itself, squatting stiffly, steals that subconscious alertness which, if a sudden hand were to descend on a shoulder, would cause a jump with the heart in the mouth. A mystical bathing, a physical brooding. It is the hour of the Earth Spirit.

But not alone of the Earth Spirit. All that has been bred of the Human Spirit for untold generations is interwoven in this web, subtly interwoven, so that that something of intangible sadness which films vision comes of a sense of human things forgone, of heroic days leaving heroic ghosts to a tenuous half-light. . . .

And thereupon, as though waiting its chance, steals through from the back of the mind the thought that possibly he saw it like this, and, having seen, was driven to jotting down 'notes' like any conscious, deliberate artist. That was the inexplicable, portentous thing, the uncomfortable thing. I should have been prepared to

accept the tragic circumstances as they were plainly accepted by the village or township. The young headmaster had taken to the practice of bathing down by the rocks in the evening after school hours. Then one night he didn't come back, and later a little heap of clothes was found in Breac Cove.

Cold, deep, green water licks about the black, barnacled rocks by the entrance to Breac Cove, the speckled cave, with its wonderful fairy-coloured walls of purples and yellows and greens, with its great flattish roof curving to the droop of a gashed upper lip and beset by tiny stalactites—stalactites which can draw no answering forms from the round, multi-coloured pebbles that slither uneasily beneath a wandering foot. Wrack of sea-ware here, too, going inward in parallel lines of high-tidal storm, till all is swallowed up in a threatening gloom. Regarded steadily, how this gloom is pierced by shifty, glittering points of light like the beady eyes of monstrous, tusked sea-animals lying in wait!

That, and the mystifying scabious 'note'—together with my most vivid memories of his attitude to this same grey Seaboard when we 'dugged' together in Edinburgh. His vehemence had startled me. 'I tell you I wouldn't go back there—no, not though it meant a fortune; not though it meant——' wordless, he waved an arm and laughed harshly. 'The place is dead, man! It's done! Good God, it's full of ghosts! The little harbours are silting up, the curing sheds are roofless, the boats are gone. And what else is there? What else was there ever there but life in the heyday of the old mad fishings? What are the few crofts but crouching, squatting brute things—dead, too, by heavens!' He walked up and down, while I continued to stare at him. The face, normally pale, had whitened to a lip-twisted intensity; the eyes, normally lazy, became storm-points of light. 'No, not likely! We've been starved enough! When I get my degree I'm going out East. I'm going to get warm with colour and sun and snakes!' Then he became conscious of himself and sat down; but somehow his throaty laugh availed nothing and died abruptly into a long silence.

That was his first real outbreak. But once he had thus shown his mind, it appeared much easier for him thereafter to refer to the matter. Any desolate scene, any description of grey barren wastes, would draw a sort of commenting undertone. 'Just so!' He understood all about it. Not much could be told him. The most fearsome and ungodly places could at best draw a nod. 'Quite. I follow. But——' 'But what?' 'To be the finished

article it just lacks that something of deca ——' 'Look here, Iainy, you're getting positively distorted, a bally decadent ——' 'My dear chap, who's the decadent? Do I go reading all that sort of stuff you do? Do I have anything to do with Celtic Twilights or quattrocantists or any life-at-second-hand business of that sort? You enjoy that: I don't—no more than I do the grey wastes—yonder!' 'Well, dammit, why can't you leave the blessed wastes alone?' I said, suddenly put out. 'I'm going to, I assure you. Don't worry about that!'

I didn't exactly worry about it. Yet like an insidious poison his sort of tormented visioning of our birthland must have got some sort of hold on me, for a chance occurring to spend a protracted period in Italy I jumped at it. Free of his influence, in that land of colour and sun, my memories by degrees so softened that I was guilty once or twice (oh, the stifling heat and the flies of high summer!) of writing verses to that birthland, each line drenched, indeed, in the cool dews of the northern twilights. If only old Iain had been able to look through his eyelashes. . . . Then came chance word that he had accepted the old Oulster school! I was shocked. I should have been infinitely less shocked, I think, if I had heard he had proceeded to the South Sea Islands and 'gone native.'

No one else appeared to be shocked, however. A stray home paper reached me commenting on how happy the appointment, how fitting indeed that an Honours graduate should return to shed lustre on the places of his boyhood, and (they doubted not) be instrumental in equipping many a bare-legged laddie for future high appointments in Church and State. I laughed. So much for these old proud college-day ideas. How quickly, how smoothly, the world puts them in their place, oftenest without even the sentimental paragraph of the local reporter! The Seaboard wasn't such a dead place after all! In truth, I didn't quite know whether to be sorry or pleased about it; for I am willing to confess that Iain's sensitiveness to Seaboard 'atmosphere' had not been lost on me. Even at that time I had been jealous of justifying the artist, the literary spirit; and how disturbing had been that elusive atmosphere to him then, how real! I had understood intimately—even while I may have wished that the old homeland had not been the subject of it. Yet now here he was apparently, having sloughed this sensitive skin, settling down to the daily round, much in the style of hard-fisted business men who have

had what they regard as their callow Tennyson or Browning days. And that I didn't like.

However, there was abundant material of assurance for me in Italy, inexhaustible assurance, and it was not until the succeeding autumn that I visited the homeland—to find Oulster hush-voiced in gloom. Breac Cove with that little heap of clothes, the scabious 'note,' and my Edinburgh memories. . . . I got up from the ditchside to find my body a-shiver. Could I accept the 'accident'? Would there not be some more 'notes' somewhere among his papers? . . . But the evening chill must have crept to my bones, and I shivered again.

## II.

To come into the presence of Iain's mother is instinctively to perform some act of courtesy or homage. A suffusing welcoming of the face, a mysterious something of the spirit, a thin blue-veined hand—and you are bending over that hand as over a queen's. Your mind hesitates to dare any expression of sympathy, for words, conventional words, are stilled in this air of quiet steadfastness, of sweet dignity.

'The sea is cruel,' she says presently. 'I've always been frightened of the sea, though we've always belonged to it. We managed to send him away—but he didn't escape it.' The eyes moisten, the lips grow tremulous, the thin fingers make a little pleat of the black silk dress on her lap. 'He always had a word for you.'

'We were happy together.'

She nods. I turn away, for there is that in her face I may not look long upon.

'He was a good boy to come home—because of me. But I should—I should have left him.'

In the end, as I prepare to go, it is with the utmost sincerity I manage: 'I thought I might be of some little help. All his books and papers—I could arrange and pack them—anything like that.'

My hand receives a quick pressure. It is very kind of me. I mumble something, to find that the tears are in my throat, that they sting my eyes. I turn quickly up the little path from the schoolhouse.

On the morrow she left the schoolhouse to return to the old



fishing cottage, her brave adventure over ; back to the old walls, the old memories, to sit through the half-light till the fulfilment of that mystical promise of a final Dawn.

Her going gave me a whole evening, a whole night, alone with his books. I locked the front door, I drew the blinds of his study. My legs trembled with the slightest excitement. There was just this about it : I felt that were there anything unusual in the manner of his disappearance, then the information were better in my hands than in those, perhaps, of any other. Whether I could understand better or not was an argument in self-modesty that did not arise : I knew definitely I could so keep the information to myself that the lady his mother, having made her great spiritual renunciation, should not be aroused by the black iniquity of soulless, boweless gossip.

The first superficial survey of his study astonished me. Yes, he had very decidedly started reading. I skim over the bindings. Fancy gets struck by the prevailing note of green, from the lengthy row of old Bohn's Classical Library to Conrad's 'Chance.' Sea-green, I immediately think, and pause to look more closely at obviously new backs. As title follows title I hear the sea's surge, see it breaking on tropical reef or on grey rock of the Hebrides. The grey note is actually interspersed, too, with a Yeats and, yes, a grey-covered Fiona Macleod.

Of course ! I pluck out the Fiona Macleod. . . . Ah, I expected it, I knew it ! The volume is pencil-annotated into a criss-cross jigsaw puzzle. Here on a double sheet of notepaper are something like the beginnings of a considered essay—on the Celtic Twilight ! The opening satire is good, if a trifle bitter, sweeping. He finds it difficult to be patient. Then my smile dies out. A short paragraph, and the Seaboard lives before me. Gathering a few choice Celtic blooms he throws them with the slightest of gestures into the Seaboard atmosphere, and immediately they shrivel up like flowers in a grey frost. 'Here's the Celtic Twilight for you, if you like !' he says. I rebel in the first words that come : 'Ah, but you forget that you are looking at an old literature with a modern, agnostic eye. That makes a difference !' And suddenly it is as though I see his face before me, his mouth twisting. 'And wasn't Fiona Macleod a modern ?' I snap the book to and return it.

I have got to make a pathway through this jungle of reading and annotating : he has got to put the weapon in my hand.

Promiscuous quotation would be like cutting round and round in a circle. Let me take a poem of his, both because it hints at the true significance of that scabious 'note,' and because verse-making does necessitate a process of thought-refining, a certain quintessential treatment of idea. It is the only completed poem I find—whatever else of verse there is being fragmentary. It is also interesting as carrying on the Edinburgh attitude, so that there is a certain mental continuity—with this addition: that he is now attempting to give concise expression to his physical desire for the Seaboard's opposite.

It is headed 'The Croft,' and the opening verses run:

'The dark wind up the braes  
From the cold sea  
Comes whining its barren ways  
Through the grey tufts, days on days,  
Mercilessly,  
Combing each withered mass  
Of wilted hair;  
Between the tufts there pass  
The lean kine cropping the grass,  
Grey-green and bare.  
No more colour nor sound  
Than that. The stern  
Lean years are all around,  
Grey boulders that abound  
For death's grey cairn.'

The poem is called 'The Croft' as though instinctively the mind of the writer felt that it is the Earth Spirit that is the dominant thing—not the Human Spirit of the old crofter dominated. For from this point onward it is the old crofter of the poem who speaks. Straightway, indeed:

'Here from this sheltered lair  
Of blaeberry  
And withy stems I stare  
At the dead years and dare  
My blasphemy.'

And so he is off. As the whole runs to very many verses only the illustrative trend need be attempted. There is, for example, youth's visioning of the 'colour and sun and snakes,' the seduction of the East:

'Days out of mind did the beat  
Of my heart rhyme  
The pulse of illicit fleet  
Passing of sandall'd feet,  
Days out of time.

As Chinese lamps come aglow  
To a piping flute  
Did my secret dream-flowers blow  
Into colour and luscious sweet flow  
Of forbidden fruit.'

Luscious and rich enough, but savage, too, where

'Vast scorching noons held sway  
Over naked flesh  
That tramped down the desert's way. . . .'

The realities are envisaged to the sweat-blinding and the 'miraged mesh.' Nothing 'poetic' or 'twilight' about it. On the contrary, a savagery of primal exultation. For these things have been denied by the unpoetic grey years that lie about him like inescapable grey boulders. And he misses nothing, as though every forbidden, sensuous thing had to be savoured. Colour cannot be left alone, till in one verse it is positively cloying :

'And colour that ached on the eyes,  
From snake-lustred gleam  
To scarlet of poisonous lies ;  
And colour more soft than the sighs  
From passion's hareem.'

Such the imaging. The temptation to quote is nearly irresistible. I realise, however, that the appeal of the verses to me may be bound up in the personal element, and that to the normal reader they may be quite unexceptional. But the concluding three verses I should like to quote in order that the Edinburgh attitude may be given its due Scots metaphysical twist, and a seal set to his whole thought up to this stage. Here is the croft, here his denial of it, his rebellion against it and its 'grey creed'—his 'blasphemy,' as he calls it. Then :

'Sin ? And my dried lips twist  
On this childish name  
For the fire and the knotted fist,  
The dream-woven gossamer mist,  
The flame upon flame.

Colour and passion and sun,  
 These three my gods  
 Over all—and these three were one—  
 Painting with sundering vision  
 The very peat sods.

Sin ? Till wild laughter shook  
 When the word it saith :  
 Till old laughter—stares at the Book  
 That stares back with Jehovah's look  
 And His grey breath.'

### III.

In the absence of anything more forceful than 'The Croft,' I found myself compelled to adjust my premonitions. That the theme should have been a croft and a crofter rather than the sea and a fisherman pointed to one possible interpretation of everything; namely, that he had found in such literary outlet for his feelings a satisfying relief; nay, more, that the very 'complex' which the Seaboard stood for became, through the literary channel, an original and great unifying theme for essay and verse. I know how scarce original themes are for the modern writer, how he has to hunt for one and quarry in it. Here, on the contrary, was a positive obsession, instinct with the greatest qualities, awaiting a virile development that would be a most realistic counterblast to the Fiona Macleod twilights, and from the land of Gaeldom.

Quite. It explained everything. I became conscious of the loss of a fellow worker who might have set our Seaboard on fire. At that moment I tasted the bitterest sorrow of his passing. Yes, it surely explained everything. The scabious business was just the colour line of some contemplated poem; the bathing no more than a purging of the day's petty toils before the compositions of the night. That he should have been plucked away like that. . . .

I took a turn up and down the study. The small hours were upon the deserted schoolhouse. A sense of stillness and empty rooms surrounded me. In an involuntary visioning I saw some of the doors of these rooms standing agape, others blindly closed. Tenantless; their emptiness crowding round this ghostly brain of a room I walked in. What was I doing here? . . .

I lifted my mind from this trivial by-play. 'Yes, it explains everything,' I said. And by the very sound of my words in the

silence I suddenly knew it explained nothing. There was a 'feel' for life in him, for naked life, that no creative artistry could ever satisfy. Life itself was what mattered, was the blinding thing: not its expression, its 'life-at-second-hand business' . . .

What was I doing here? The question became insistent. The backs of the books regarded me in a certain way. The very swirl in the air I made as I walked was, as it were, populous with the question. I stopped dead.

I had no fear of Iain Mackay. I had no fear even of the appearance of his naked spirit. Whatever of mere curiosity there may have been in the original twist of my thought, there was certainly nothing now but that curiosity actuated by a sense of service. I should like to be the discoverer of knowledge so that his mother might be safe. . . . Safe from what? For the first time I really faced the question. The books watched, particularly Fiona Macleod, which I hadn't pushed right flush with the others. Safe from—from—I dismissed the halting horror of hesitation. 'Iain Mackay,' I thought, deliberately, 'epitomised in himself this particular seacoast. He knew with an intimacy of the marrow its uttermost essence. He merged again with that essence willingly or unwillingly, but in some way *wittingly*.'

I paused, listening, on edge. There was Fiona Macleod. In an instant I had gone up and smashed the book flush. On a level with my face on the top shelf of the bookcase was a tobacco smoker's cabinet, and as the bookcase shook under the impact of my fist the little wooden door of the cabinet swung noiselessly open, revealing to my staring eyes a blue tobacco jar and a black-covered, thick notebook leaning against it.

A notebook! Presently my hand reached out for it; then restraining a desire to look around, I went deliberately to the oak knee-desk and sat down.

#### IV.

It was a diary of sorts, at least an irregularly kept record of evening excursions and midnight thought. It starts with the Edinburgh attitude, toned down as theory must be toned down in face of actualities. He notes things, names them, severs the thought from the fact in many a raw local phrase. This impression of coming into contact with things physically is very vivid, the visual sense being curiously abetted by the tactile. You can not only

see the grey rock his hands touch, but feel its roughness with his finger-tips ; and not only the tactile but the auditory as well, so that when sand is rubbed by his bare soles on a dry ledge of the rock the sound sets your teeth on edge.

And you sense the same old aim in it all. He is at his game of purposely stripping things bare, tearing ruthlessly the films and the fancies, so that the essential starkness may be laid open—like a dry fibrous wound. For there is no blood in the body of this land of his, only a greyness and unheeding expanse. There may be a skeleton—of kirkyard bones. He wants to make sure he has no illusions about that, no ‘ Celtic Twilight hallucinations,’ as he insistently puts it.

And then the change comes.

It comes gradually, almost furtively. A few leaves of the notebook escape under the fingers and it is more pronounced. Little by little he is slipping into the habit of identifying himself with things, at first with the apparent excuse of gaining more graphic force in the phrasing, but then, as it seems, without his always being aware of it. Keats said he could be the sparrow pecking about the gravel ; but the old woman of Tíree said :

‘ It is the grey rock I am,  
And the grey rain on the rock.’

Iain was losing his destroying, logical objectiveness, and occasionally identifying himself with the outer forces, the surrounding elemental forces. Not yet at the stage of the old woman of Tíree by any means, but rendered occasionally reflective, subjective, in a new momentarily quiescent way. The process goes on, subtly but persistently, begins to eat into him with a certain secretiveness which he plainly hides even from himself ; then less plainly hides ; until at last even the human figures he encounters become slightly more significant than spent automata.

Slipping some more pages, I find this entry where the secretiveness blossoms :

‘ Went out on the edge of the dark and came on Ould Sanny at the Look-out. His grey whiskers were to the sea and he spoke to me without turning round. I wonder what moves in his head ? I’ll tackle him one of these nights, when I’ve more time. I know definitely he thinks now and then of the old fishing days, and *sees* them, too. He draws in his breath on that wheezy “Ay,” then spits fully. “Done ! Done !” he says. “It’s no’ what I remem-



ber." It's not. God knows it's not. The gaping curing sheds in the darkening, the glooming, pervasive greyness, the lonely calling of the wheeling gulls. As I left Ould Sanny I felt like laughing at it all, as it twisted and knotted in me. A husk of a place! A place to be laughed at. . . .

'I used to laugh, too, at Fiona Macleod and the like, but now—I'm damned if I'm not becoming fanciful myself. The tall grey salmon-net poles "got" me to-night. They stand there in that bunch near enough together, so that you could almost spit from one to the other; yet to-night each seemed lonely and thin and wrapped up in a grey self-communing. "Apart" is the word. Good Lord—"apart!" Yet there it is. These bits of grey weather-cracked poles! And they "got" me with a sense of kinship, so that I stood amongst them till my hearing and sight became preternaturally acute and my body stiff and immovable. From their little green plateau you look down on the harbour basin. It is empty. Look long enough—it fills! Oh, I know it is imagination, that I am allowing my staring eyes "to see things." Obviously there is nothing—nothing material. There is merely this much: the place has its "influence." By way of experiment, I have given way to this influence once or twice. I give way again. A certain hypnotic, sinking sensation. . . . The harbour basin fills. Boat-decks, rigging, masts slanting to rest in their crutches, figures moving about, at first dimly, then more distinctly; a face, faces; sounds: all coming before the staring eyes through stages, as it were, of imperfect focussing, till the picture lives, moves, throbs. A species of "movies," if you like—for away from the influence one must needs jest about it to keep balance. But under the influence—my father's stride, a trifle quicker than the others; the face a trifle more alert; the tongue with its ever ready shaft. And there his men from the Lews—the heave-ho! chant of the Gaelic voices, the *krik! krik!* of the halyards as mast goes slowly aloft. The brown sails—there they go slipping past the quay-wall to breast the sea: out of the smooth harbour-basin to this restless dipping and rising and gliding of the great, brown-winged sea-birds they are. The smother of life left behind, the ripe richness of the young women gutters' faces, the kindly wrinkles of the old, the incredibly deft fingers, the talk, the laughter, the work.

'An ache comes to the soul, the lips stir to an old savour, saline, brimful of life. Something here of the marrow, ineradicable. School-keeping, shop-keeping, book-clerking, all the pale, anaemic occupations of landsmen and citymen, dear Lord—how ghostly! their passion a hectic spurting, their contentment a grey haze. Teaching children all day long so that they may "get on," may be successful in attaining the clerical stool or pulpit, or in measuring,

at a profit, so many yards of red flannel for a country woman's needs. Eh? And being polite always: it pays. God!

'I am a throw-back, am I? Sort of quintessential heritage? All this centred in me as the living evocation of a dead Seaboard? Perhaps my very hate of this place but a sort of wrong-headed savage worship? What a damned juggling with perhappes!'

Then farther on, and one stage farther on, this:

'With what an exquisite shudder the cold green water twists round body and limbs! It ensheaths you. Gracious and savage in a way less obvious than the East. In its coldness what caressing of clean passion! You want to throw caution to the winds and write of it in a choice prose, as of a beautiful woman, coldly unattainable, but near, so that her eyes are regarding yours with a measured expressionlessness—that at any moment may break and engulf you.

'I struggle to cast off this twilight phrasing, to regard the sea with clear eyes, knowing the Old Man as he is—veritably "sea-green and incorruptible." Yet even that leads me to a choosing of images! And when the shuddering caress of the water takes body and limbs, and an exultation grips overhand at the wave-tops. . . . You can keep going on for ever. Turning back, indeed, is a shattering. On and on, the under knowledge that you are going too far breeding a warning and an excitement. And how vision riots as the doubtfulness of the body's safety increases! In such a position is not one justified in dropping the stark logicalities and rioting, has not one earned the right? On and on, arm cleaving, body cleaving. . . .

'Suddenly it is as though something pulls you up. You stop, tread water, look back to the shore. Panic forces rush to a muster. You mutter a scattering imprecation at them—and start back in a long slow stroke. The water grows chilly, gets the back of your neck in a cold grip when you turn over. It is a long way. It is a devilish long way. Limbs begin to drag. A numbing sensation spreads. . . .

'At last the jagged rocks, the dark weeds, the black entrance to Breac Cove. Feet touch. You drag the body a yard or two and let it lie. The round stones press into it softly, the wet weed is a velvety caress. Your head rolls off your arm to the cool stones and the sea-water is a faint gurgling and lapping infinitely far off. You realise with a remote, impersonal unconcern that you could not have gone much farther—and come back. . . .'

One more quotation and we are done, though it is with

reluctance I pass over a description of the twilight hour in Breac Cove, not so much because of the wild beauty and lurking ferocity dwelt upon, as of the obvious giving way to its 'influence.'

'The struggle to-night was the hardest yet, for when the pause came and the panic forces rushed the brain, I continued to tread water and did not immediately start for the shore. In going out a saying had come to my mind from "The Little Book of the Great Enchantment," and prefaced, I think, to "The Dirge of the Four Cities," by Fiona Macleod. Fiona Macleod! There will ever be a grain of bitterness in my acknowledgment of him, or of Yeats, or of any of the modern Celtic twilighters, an irritable impatience of their pale fancies, their posturing sonorities and follies. Yet on a certain side they are "getting" me, and sometimes a phrase, a thought, has a positively uncanny, mesmeric power over my very flesh.

'This sort of dream poetry is clearly a drug, and of the most insidious. Intellect strives and flashes towards some final revealing illumination—till the effort inevitably expends itself like a twopenny rocket attempting the work of a sun. And when failure thus rushes down in a renewed darkness, swamping all meaning and logic—dream poetry is there a glimmering half-light, beckoning. Not an interpretation of the Ultimates: a refuge from them. The man of action, with his raw grip on the realities, ignores it—till he finds the sphere of his activities dissolved like some unsubstantial pageant, till (for this is the thought) the routh of life that swarmed the Seaboard and clothed the very salmon-poles, is left a ghostly greyness and a calling of gulls. Then poetry casts its net, its iridescent net, and the silvery fish of the intellect is meshed in the music of lost days and beauties foregone. My images get mixed, I think—like my thought, and the raw-bitter becomes the bitter-sweet. Such a lovely vagueness is poetry, if one could but admit it. Perhaps the making of all great poetry has involved this fight—and this admission. Perhaps the men who have written greatly of the half-light have known the stark realities of the light. Let me say as much, even if I don't believe it yet, for, after all, what do I know of the Ultimates that I should talk of a refuge from them? . . . There the fading light on the breast of the sea, there the dim-glowing West facing me as arm and body cleave through: and haunting my brain hypnotically the saying: "And the symbol of Murias is a hollow that is filled with water and fading light."

I am conscious of a light, a glimmering light. It is the half-light of the dawn on the window blind.

## V.

'Come away ben,' she invited me, after we had sat in the kitchen for a little time; and I followed her to the parlour. It was bare of the gilt china ornaments and feminine gods of the old days; indeed, it was altogether bare.

'This,' she said simply, 'is going to be his study.'

I knew a moment's insecurity. I suppose I was still young enough to think that tragedy is a thing to be swept into the dark places out of mind.

'So we'll put the bookcase there,' she went on, gently, indicating a wall, 'and the desk there—fornent the window.'

I nodded, and, looking away through the window, saw the grey sea. Old, it looked, as eternity.

'My time cannot be so long—and the books and things of his will be company for me.' Her voice was thin and very sweet. A quietening came on me.

At the doorway I turned. Her eyes were smiling on me through her tears.

'He loved being here at home with you,' I said. 'He was happy with you. And he loved the old harbour and the sea.'

'Perhaps, perhaps,' she answered, her hands pressing my hand in quick acknowledgment. 'I am so glad you think it. It was sometimes—on my mind. But I think he did love it—in the end; and we've always belonged to the sea. . . .'

### SIR WALTER SCOTT IN LONDON.

ABOUT a hundred years ago Charles Lamb, as he was about to turn from Fleet Street to pass into the Inner Temple, was stopped by a working man, who said to him : ' I beg pardon, sir, but perhaps you would like to see Sir Walter Scott—that is he just crossing the road.' Lamb—so Talfourd tells us—used to speak with gratitude and pleasure about the glimpse he caught of 'The Author of Waverley' as he was crossing Fleet Street. Perhaps some of Sir Walter's admirers of the present day may also derive pleasure in observing his honoured figure as he went about London, passing through some of its familiar streets and entering some of its famous houses.

It is too much the habit to regard Sir Walter Scott as a sort of 'Wizard of the North,' who sat amid his native mountains and mists, pouring forth the numerous romances in which all ranks of the English-speaking peoples will find pleasure for all time. But Sir Walter Scott was not merely the author of 'Marmion' and of 'Waverley.' He was a man of affairs as well as a man of letters—a man of action as well as a man of meditation. As the Ettrick Shepherd has truly said of him in some lines which, although they are unpolished in form, are accurate in idea :

' For all the volumes thou hast wrote  
Those that are owned and that are not  
Let these be conned even to a grain  
I've said it and will say't again  
Who knows thee but by these alone  
The better half is still unknown.'

In spite of the many occupations which kept Sir Walter busily engaged in Scotland—his duties as a Clerk of the Court of Session, his functions as a Judge, his activities as a Quartermaster of a Corps of Volunteers—in spite of his devotion to his greatest hobby, Abbotsford—in spite, above all, of his extraordinary industry as a writer—he was able to find time to do a large amount of travelling, during the course of which he came to London no fewer than thirteen times. Usually he came for some special purpose, but he never failed to combine pleasure with business, and the records of

his movements in London form some of the most interesting passages in the life of one of the most attractive of men.

To set out from Edinburgh on a journey to London at the beginning of the last century was to undertake something in the nature of an adventure. In order to avoid the expense and inconvenience involved in making the journey by road, Scott usually came by sea. Only twice does he record the names of the vessels in which he made the passage—they were *The Duchess of Buccleuch* and *The City of Edinburgh*, the latter of which belonged to the London and Edinburgh Steamship Company. In those days sixty hours were occupied in making the passage between Leith and Miller's Wharf, Wapping, and the charge per passenger for a first-class cabin was three guineas. Later, however, Scott found the sea passage too irksome for him, and he was compelled to make the journey by post-chaise, which occupied about seven days and cost between thirty and fifty pounds. He seldom travelled by the direct way along the 'vile North Road,' as he called it, but chose a more interesting, if more circuitous route.

The accounts of Scott's movements in London, so far as the earlier visits are concerned, are very limited. Lockhart is unable to give many details, and Sir Walter's correspondence is equally lacking in information. It is only after 1825, when he began to keep his 'Journal,' that more particulars of his visits are obtainable. The task of tracing Sir Walter Scott's footsteps in London has, therefore, not been an easy one, and the results obtained are necessarily incomplete; where, too, it has been possible to locate a house into which he went it has often been found that the house has been pulled down. There are to-day only about twenty buildings left which remain in much the same condition as they were a century ago when Scott entered them.

The first occasion on which Scott left his native North was in 1775, when he was four years old. An affectionate aunt took him to Bath in order that a course of the waters might be tried as a cure for his lameness. On the way they passed through London, where, recording the event—one of the earliest of his recollections—in his autobiography, thirty-three years afterwards, Scott mentions that he saw the 'common shows' usually exhibited to strangers. Of this visit he retained a very vivid impression, and was astonished to find how accurate it was when, in 1799—twenty-four years later—accompanied by his wife, he came to London for the second time. Little is known about this visit except that he spent some of his



time in the Manuscript room of the British Museum, which, although situated in Bloomsbury, was then a very different place from what it is now, the National Collection being located in those days in Montague House. He went to the Tower of London, to which he afterwards made several incidental allusions in the novels. To Westminster Abbey he also paid a visit, and the chief architectural features of the roof of Westminster Hall he did not fail to remember when he came to describe the beams in the banquetting chamber of 'Wolf's Crag.' Indeed, it would be surprising if so cosmopolitan an author as Sir Walter Scott had not drawn upon his visits to London to supply him with material for his novels. As a matter of fact scenes are laid in, or references are made to, London in all of the Waverley Novels except 'The Legend of Montrose,' 'The Talisman,' 'The Betrothed,' 'The Fair Maid of Perth,' 'Castle Dangerous,' and 'Count Robert of Paris.' What is curious about these scenes and references is that in nearly every case they relate to the City and not to the West End, which was the part of the town best known to Scott.

Although there is no space in this article to deal with London in the Waverley Novels, yet a brief mention must be made of 'The Fortunes of Nigel,' which is not only to be numbered among Scott's greatest masterpieces, but is also one of the finest of all exclusively London novels. The action of the story, which is chiefly laid in Fleet Street, is moved to several other places still in existence; but Alsatia, which, as Leigh Hunt once observed, 'Scott described as though he had lived there,' has all been swept away.

His third visit to London was in the spring of 1803, when John Leyden, the entirely self-educated son of a Roxburgh shepherd, who had acquired such a wealth of information by the time he was nineteen as to astound the Edinburgh Professors, was leaving London for a 'distant and a deadlier shore.' Sir Walter, desirous of bidding his friend farewell, left Edinburgh as soon as the Court of Session rose for the vacation, but arrived too late to see Leyden. Lady Scott travelled with him, and on this occasion the greatest of all dog-lovers, he who never liked to be without the companionship of one of his four-footed friends, brought with him his favourite bull-terrier 'Camp.' They stayed with M. Dumergue, the Court dentist, who was a friend of Lady Scott's, having greatly assisted her mother when she was driven to this country as a refugee from France in the days of the Revolution. M. Dumergue lived with his family at No. 15, Piccadilly West, which stood a few yards west of

Devonshire House, at the corner of Whitehouse Street. It was pulled down in 1887, when the Junior Naval and Military Club was erected on its site. It is very unfortunate this particular house has disappeared, because it was here that Scott stayed during most of his visits to town.

Having missed the primary object of this third journey to London—the farewell to Leyden—Scott spent much of his time in looking through the manuscripts in the magnificent library of the Duke of Roxburghe, who lived at what is now No. 13, St. James's Square. This house is occupied to-day by the Windham Club, in the library of which are still preserved the book-shelves which once contained the treasures of the celebrated collection.

Three years elapsed before Scott again appeared in London. This, his fourth, visit in 1806 was made that he might repair personally an omission in the patent transferring to him the duties of a Clerk of the Court of Session hitherto performed by Mr. George Home. Sir Walter had agreed that Mr. Home, although relieved of all the duties of the office, should continue to draw the whole of the salary attached to it; but the clause embodying this agreement had been inadvertently omitted from the patent authorising the transfer. The publication of 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' in 1805 had given Scott a more wide-spread fame, and he began to experience the homage paid by London to a 'lion.' He himself appears to have realised the attraction which fame and popularity were bringing him. 'After all,' he writes to Lord Dalkeith, 'a little reputation is of some use here. I suppose Solomon, when he compared a good name to a pot of ointment, meant that it oiled the hinges of the hall-doors into which the possessors of that inestimable treasure wished to penetrate. What a *good* name was in Jerusalem, a *known* name seems to be in London.'

Two events which occurred during this visit are especially worthy of record. The first is that the 'Minstrel of the Border' had his first meeting with the 'Poetess of Hampstead.' Sir Walter had the highest regard for Joanna Baillie and seldom failed to pay her a visit at her home at Bolton House, which still remains to be numbered among the most interesting of Hampstead houses. Writing to Joanna Baillie at a later date, Scott mentions that after leaving her house one night he took a short cut across the fields and there experienced 'the most dreadful fright I ever had in my life.' He was followed by a foot-pad—'a thorough-paced London ruffian . . . judging from the squalid and jail-bird appearance and

blackguard expression of countenance.' But fortunately Scott came to no more harm than experiencing for about five minutes feelings which, he says, he would not have wished his worst enemy to undergo.

The second of the two interesting events is also concerned with a poet. One of the most productive sources of information about any person or any period is to be found in the pages of contemporary journals. Mr. John Richardson, the Scottish lawyer who caught the prize salmon at Abbotsford to Tom Purdie's great annoyance, was obliging enough to keep a diary, and his manuscript journal—for it has never been published—provides the details of a most interesting visit which Scott, accompanied by Richardson and James Ballantyne, paid to Campbell, who was then living at Sydenham. Campbell had just composed his 'Turkish Lady' and recited it both before and after dinner. At nine o'clock his guests went to the Greyhound, a public-house which still stands close to Sydenham Station much in its original condition except that it has been refronted. Here Scott and his friends, it is recorded, 'consumed beef-steaks for supper, with a liberal allowance of brandy-punch,' and spent altogether a very merry evening, it being remarkable if for no other reason than that it was one of the very few occasions upon which Scott was ever known to sing. The little party, comprising these three friends, slept the night at the Greyhound, and proceeded next morning, accompanied by Campbell, to Camberwell Green, where, in the words of the diarist, they resorted to 'the pot-house where the coaches stopped, and had some bread and cheese and porter.' Unfortunately this pot-house, The Red Cap, has been entirely rebuilt. Here Sir Walter gave one of the most striking of the many proofs of his retentive memory by repeating the whole of 'The Turkish Lady' to his astonished companions, which, says Richardson, 'was a surprising effort of memory after the *discipline* of the night before.'

It may be added in passing that Scott paid another visit to Campbell at a later date when he was living in Margaret Street, Cavendish Square. Cyrus Redding was present on this occasion, and in his 'Recollections of Fifty Years' he records that when Scott left Campbell composed this impromptu :

'Quoth the South to the North "In your comfortless sky  
Not a nightingale sings." "True," the North made reply,  
"But your nightingale warblings I envy them not  
When I think of the strains of my Burns and my Scott."'

Although Sir Walter, at one time or another, went to see most of his brother poets who were living in London, these are the only lines which his visits inspired.

Scott's desire to be present at the conference between John Murray and John Ballantyne concerning the establishment of the 'Quarterly Review,' and a request from the Lord Advocate that he would undertake some duties in connection with the Scottish Law Commission, were the two reasons which prompted him, early in 1809, to set out on his fifth journey southwards, in which he was accompanied by Lady Scott and their elder daughter, Sophia. This proved to be the longest stay ever made by Scott in London, for he remained in town over two months and, his fame having been greatly increased by the recent publication of 'Marmion,' he was the object of even more admiration and hospitality than he had received during any of his previous visits.

His great friend, Mr. Morritt of Rokeby, who was living at his town house at 24, Portland Place, which is unchanged to-day except that it is now No. 68, told Lockhart that 'the attention paid to Sir Walter would have turned the head of any less gifted man of eminence'; but Scott was quite unaffected by it, merely remarking in his usual modest and good-hearted way: 'All this is very flattering and very civil and if people are amused with hearing me tell a parcel of old stories or recite a pack of ballads to lovely young girls and gaping matrons, they are easily pleased, and a man would be very ill-natured who would not give pleasure so cheaply conferred.'

At this time Mr. Sotheby, the translator of 'Oberon,' was accustomed to give his famous dinner parties at his house, No. 13, Grosvenor Street, which remains unaltered, except that some subsequent and superstitious occupier has changed its number to 12a. A great gathering of literary lions, of whom Scott was one, met under his hospitable roof one evening, and after dinner some of the poets present, including Coleridge, recited some of their own verse. Scott, when it came to his turn, said he had nothing of his own which was worth repeating, but he would recite some lines he remembered to have seen in *The Morning Post*. After he had been applauded for his spirited rendering of these lines, some severe criticisms were passed upon them, from which Scott vigorously defended the author, whose name he had not disclosed. At last somebody described one line as 'utter nonsense,' whereupon Coleridge, who up to that point had been silent, exclaimed: 'For God's sake let Mr. Scott alone.

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I wrote the poem!' Scott had repeated the powerful lines spoken by Fire, Famine and Slaughter in 'A War Eclogue.'<sup>1</sup>

Six years then elapsed before Sir Walter again came to London. In the spring of 1815, again on the rising of the Court of Session, he started from Edinburgh on his sixth visit, accompanied once more by Lady Scott and Sophia. Great as had been his reception before, it was still greater on this occasion. Joanna Baillie—to use her own words—prepared him 'to be stared at only a little less than the Czar of Muscovy or old Blücher.' His fame as a poet had been increased by the recent publication of 'The Lord of the Isles.' Moreover this, the sixth visit of Walter Scott to London, was the first visit of the 'Author of Waverley,' and in every house the 'Great Unknown' entered he found copies of 'Waverley' and 'Guy Mannering.' The merits and the authorship of these two novels formed the principal topic of the conversation of the day. Although there were but twenty-two persons admitted into the Waverley secret, yet a large number of people in London, as elsewhere, had, less than twelve months after the publication of 'Waverley,' guessed who was the author. Miss Lucy Aikin records in her diary that she and her aunt, Mrs. Barbauld, were among the guests at a dinner-party given by Mr. and Mrs. Carr at Frognal, Hampstead, to which Scott had also been invited. During dinner Sotheby, having been asked to mention the subject of 'Waverley' so that the company might judge by any change in his countenance whether Scott was the author, said: 'I have heard, Mr. Scott, that a new novel is coming out by the 'Author of Waverley'; have you heard of it?' 'I have,' replied Scott very deliberately, 'and I believe it.' After which a discussion arose on the novels. 'But,' continues Miss Aikin, 'Scott kept out of the debate, and had not the assurance to say any handsome things of the works, though,' she adds, 'he is not the author—oh no! for he denies them.' While all the novels were printed in Edinburgh by Messrs. James Ballantyne and Co., one of the wooden presses which they employed now stands in the composing room of Messrs. Spottiswoode, Ballantyne and Co., New Street Square.

It was during this stay in London that Scott, by special invitation of Mr. John Murray, met Lord Byron at 50, Albemarle Street, and, conversing with him for nearly two hours in the famous drawing-room, thus brought about what James Ballantyne called

<sup>1</sup> Lockhart, in his *Life of Scott*, put this incident in 1809. E. H. Coleridge, however, assigns it to 1803, as Coleridge did not leave the Lake District between Sept. 1808 and Oct. 1810. (*Poetical Works of Coleridge*, Appendix III, 1912)

'the mighty consummation of the two bards.' If only walls could speak, surely those of Mr. John Murray's drawing-room would have one of the most interesting of all tales to tell. It remains to-day very nearly as it was a century ago, and there can be few houses, if any, which contain so numerous and valuable a collection of literary relics. To say nothing of the fire-place where Byron's 'Memoirs' were burned in 1824, there are among the contents a writing-desk used by Scott, his gold-mounted malacca cane, a Waterloo memorial ring given by him to Mrs. Murray, two portraits of him, and a lock of his silver-grey hair preserved in a gold snuff-box that belonged to Byron. The manuscript of 'The Abbot' is, among other Scott treasures, in the possession of Mr. John Murray, the fourth of his famous line.

Scott was entertained one evening by the Prince Regent at Carlton House, and among other anecdotes with which he delighted his host and fellow-guests, he told the famous story of Lord Braxfield—the hanging judge—who concluded pronouncing sentence of death upon his former adversary of the chess-board by saying: 'And now, Donald, my man, I think I've checkmated you for ance.' Later in the evening the Prince Regent called for 'a bumper with all honours to the Author of Waverley'; before Scott, who, in replying, said he would take care that the real Simon Pure heard of the high compliment which had been shown him, could resume his seat, the Prince called for 'Another of the same, if you please, to the Author of Marmion,' and added: 'Now, Walter, my man, I have checkmated you for ance.'

Scott's keen interest in military affairs and his particular pride in the gallant feats of the Highland regiments at Waterloo made him so eager to see the battlefield that he set out for the Continent a little under six weeks after the battle had been fought. He left Scotland on July 27, 1815, for Harwich. There he embarked for Helvoetsluys, which he reached in safety, though the crossing was made somewhat perilous by the frequency with which the captain of the vessel insisted on drinking to the health of his distinguished passenger. After spending some six weeks on the Continent, Scott recrossed the Channel from Dieppe to Brighton, and, in proceeding back to Scotland, passed through London, thus entering the Metropolis for the seventh time. This was but a short stay, and the only incident worthy of mention is that Scott had his last meeting with Byron at Long's hotel in Bond Street. This famous hotel, which stood nearly opposite Grafton Street, was pulled down about fifty years ago.



An interval of about five years elapsed between this short stay and the next visit. It was decided in 1819 to honour literature by bestowing a baronetcy upon Walter Scott, who was much gratified to hear that it came direct from the 'Source of Honour,' and was not the result of any ministerial advice. It was for the purpose of receiving this baronetcy that Scott journeyed to London for the eighth time in 1820. Allan Cunningham, who, when he was a stone-mason in Scotland, was so enthusiastic an admirer of the 'Author of Marmion' that he walked twenty miles into Edinburgh and back for the sole purpose of catching a glimpse of him, had become Sir Francis Chantrey's Superintendent of the Works when Scott came to London on this occasion. Sir Walter was staying, as usual, with the Dumergues in Piccadilly when Allan Cunningham called upon him with a request that he would give a few sittings to the famous sculptor. Chantrey's studio, which was situated in Eccleston Street, has disappeared, its site being occupied to-day by a block of flats, but his great masterpiece—the bust of Sir Walter Scott—remains, in Lockhart's words, 'to preserve for posterity the cast of expression most fondly remembered by all who ever mingled in his domestic circle.'

Sir Thomas Lawrence, commanded by the King to paint portraits of some of His Majesty's most distinguished subjects for the galleries at Windsor, requested Scott to sit for the first of the series, and accordingly Sir Walter attended several times at Sir Thomas's studio in Russell Square, which was demolished when the Imperial hotel was built. It so happened, therefore, that the two most famous and faithful likenesses of Sir Walter Scott, the Chantrey bust and the Lawrence portrait, were executed simultaneously, the one at Pimlico and the other in Bloomsbury.

Sir Walter went back to Scotland to attend the marriage of his daughter Sophia to Lockhart, but before twelve months had passed he was in London again. This visit in 1821, his ninth, was undertaken at the request of his brother clerks of the Court of Session so that they might have a representative in London during the passing of an Act of Parliament which was framed to relieve them of some of their drudgery. Scott travelled alone, and this time stayed, not with the Dumergues, but at the Waterloo hotel, which was situated in Jermyn Street, between Duke Street and York Street.

Here, so he complains in a letter, he found no companionable dog, but discovered 'a tolerably conversable cat, who eats a mess of cream with me in the morning.' During this visit, which lasted two months, Sir Walter spent a very gay time, being courted and

entertained by many of the most fashionable and brilliant men and women of the day. But he quickly grew tired of so luxurious a life and longed to be at Abbotsford again, for he writes in another letter: 'I am heartily tired of fine company and fine living, from dukes and duchesses down to turbot and plovers' eggs. It is all very well for a while, but to be kept at it makes one feel like a poodle dog compelled to stand for ever on his hind legs.'

However, Scott soon reappeared in this fine company, for only three months after his return to Abbotsford he again came to town. This tenth visit was made for the sole purpose of witnessing the Coronation of George IV. Some eighteen months before, when he came to receive his baronetcy, he resolved, after seeing the preparations for the ceremony, that he would, if possible, 'just pop up and see the grandee show.' As Sir Walter was passing down Whitehall, after the banquet which followed the Coronation, he received one of the greatest compliments ever paid him. Becoming locked in a dense part of the crowd, he asked a sergeant of the Scots Greys, who were lining the route, if he would allow him to pass between the files of soldiers and thus gain access to the middle of the road, which was kept free from the people. This request was abruptly refused. Just then the crowd became more dangerous and a friend, by whom he was accompanied, said 'Take care, Sir Walter Scott, take care.' Overhearing these words of caution, the sergeant turned round and exclaimed: 'What! Sir Walter Scott? He shall get through anyhow!' and, addressing his men, commanded 'Men of the Scots Greys, make way for our illustrious countryman, Sir Walter Scott!' to which the soldiers replied, 'Sir Walter Scott, God bless him!' and immediately withdrew their ranks to form a gangway through which the proud and honoured Sir Walter passed into safety.

Again there was a long interval in Scott's visits to London, and a great change in his fortunes had occurred before he made his next journey southwards. It was owing to the failure of a firm of London publishers—Hurst, Robinson and Co.—that he was involved in the great financial crash of 1826. The heroic struggle he made to pay off, with his own right hand, the debt of nearly £120,000 for which he had so honourably made himself responsible, is familiar to all readers of his 'Journal.' It is a story even more moving than any passage in the novels.

It was for the purpose of obtaining some new information for his 'Life of Napoleon' from the St. Helena letters in the Foreign

Office that Scott set out in the autumn of 1826 on his eleventh journey to London. He travelled by road and was accompanied by his younger daughter, Anne. He stayed with the Lockharts, who were then living at 25, Pall Mall. This house stood opposite the Athenæum Club, on the committee of which Scott had been co-opted a member at its foundation in 1824, but he never attended any of the committee meetings and resigned in the year of this visit.

Samuel Rogers, who lived so long as to be able to entertain all the distinguished literary folk from Sheridan to Dickens, resided at 22, St. James's Place, a house which remains to-day in much the same condition as when Scott was frequently among the banker-poet's guests. On going in to dinner one evening during this visit to London, Scott had to pass by all the servants, who had obtained permission to stand in the hall that they might obtain a close view of the 'Author of Waverley.' It was Rogers who introduced Sir Walter to Madame D'Arblay at 11, Bolton Street, Piccadilly, another house which, like Scott's own native land, stands where it did.

Quite close to Madame D'Arblay lived Mrs. Coutts, who, having been a celebrated actress, became the widow of the famous banker, and lived to become the Duchess of St. Albans. She entertained Scott to dinner at her house at the corner of Stratton Street and Piccadilly, where, at the sale of the late Mr. Burdett-Coutts' property in 1921, the famous Raeburn portrait of Scott was sold for £9,660 and, to the everlasting shame of all Scott's countrymen, was allowed to cross the Atlantic.

Scott was a great lover of the theatre—scarcely a week passed when he was in Edinburgh without his witnessing with Lady Scott some performance or other—but the only record to be found of his seeing a play in London is during this visit. He went to the old Adelphi (demolished in 1858) to see 'The Pilot,' an adaptation from Fenimore Cooper's novel, and after the performance had supper with his friend 'honest Dan Terry,' in his private apartments, off 'rare good porter and oysters.' It was Terry, by the way, who introduced to Scott Mr. Atkinson, of St. John's Wood, who was the architect of Abbotsford. Another Londoner, Mr. Bullock, who was also a friend of Terry, supplied some of the furniture for Abbotsford.

In order to continue his research work in connection with Napoleon, Sir Walter crossed over to Paris, where he remained for about four weeks, at the end of which period he returned to London. He spent some time, during the second part of his eleventh visit, in

gathering particulars of a Chancery suit concerning a claim due to the representatives of his wife's mother. For this purpose he went to Pentonville and consulted Mr. Handley, a solicitor who lived at what is now 70, Pentonville Road. The house is now occupied by the London County Council and used by them as a 'Place of Detention.'

'In no instance,' writes Scott in his 'Journal,' as he was returning home to Abbotsford, 'did I ever meet with such general attention and respect on all sides,' but all the homage paid him did not prevent him, so he confesses, from longing for 'a sheep's heart and whisky toddy against all the French cookery and champagne in the world.'

The desire to see his family, all of whom except his younger daughter Anne had left Abbotsford, and his wish to close the Chancery suit, were the reasons which prompted Scott in 1828 to pay his twelfth visit to London. The Lockharts had by this time moved to 24, Sussex Place, Regent's Park, a house which remains very much as it was when Scott made it his headquarters in town. Several of Sir Walter's old acquaintances had passed away since his previous visit. 'This great City seems almost a waste to me, so many of my friends are gone,' he pathetically records in his 'Journal.' Not a day passed, however, without his paying a visit to some friend or other, and he mentions an interesting visit he paid to Sir Robert Henry Inglis at Battersea Rise. 'Coming home,' he says, 'an Irish coachman drove us into a cul-de-sac near Battersea Bridge. We were obliged to get out in the rain. The people admitted us into their houses, where they were having their bit of supper; assisted with lights, etc., and, to the honour of London, neither asked nor expected gratification.' Not even Mr. John Burns, with all his knowledge of the intricate ways of Battersea, has been able to assist in locating this cul-de-sac.

His elder son's regiment being quartered at Hampton Court, Scott went down there to spend a day with him. With the Palace itself he was considerably struck; the pictures, however, did not greatly appeal to him, though two of them he particularly noticed depicting James I and Charles I eating in public. These two small paintings by Van Bassen are still to be seen in the Galleries, though, while one shows James I dining, the other is of the King of Bohemia. Probably what attracted Scott's attention to them is that in each are drawn four dogs.

At Chiswick House, which still stands in the midst of its thickly wooded park near Turnham Green, the Duke of Devonshire was

accustomed to entertain on a lavish scale. At one of these parties, at which Sir Walter was present, he was amused to find that 'the scene was dignified by the presence of an immense elephant, who, under the charge of a groom, wandered up and down the grounds, giving an air of Asiatic pageantry to the entertainment.'

It was during this visit, too, that Scott added to the literary associations of Holland House by attending a dinner party there. Staying rather later than was his intention, he slept in the historic mansion for the night, and, rising next morning early, as was always his custom, he wandered, accompanied by Rogers, into a green lane which might, he says, have been twenty miles from town.

At Kensington Palace, where he dined by command of the Duchess of Kent, he spent—so he says—for a Court evening, an agreeable time. He was presented to the little Princess Victoria, then nine years old, who, he says, 'is fair like the Royal Family, but does not look as if she would be pretty.' He expressed in his 'Journal' a wish which, had it been fulfilled would, alas! have prevented all of us from talking about the *Victorian* age. He hoped that the name of the future Queen would be changed. A second Royal residence visited by Scott which is still in existence was White Lodge, Richmond Park, now the home of the Duke and Duchess of York, where Lord Sidmouth then resided, and where Sir Walter met another famous Scott—Lord Stowell.

To Somerset House Scott went twice during this visit to London. He went first to breakfast as the guest of the Royal Society, but was not very hospitably entertained: 'Tea, coffee, bread and butter,' he writes in his 'Journal,' 'which is poor work. Certainly a slice of ham, a plate of shrimps, some broiled fish or a mutton chop, would have been becoming so learned a body.' When he went the second time to Somerset House he was more fortunate. He dined with the Royal Academy, which had its headquarters there from 1780 to 1837, Sir Thomas Lawrence, the President, doing, he says, the honours of the evening very well.

Scott numbered among his friends several of the members of the Government. The Duke of Wellington, the only man whose presence caused him to feel awed and abashed, supplied him with much original material for his 'Life of Napoleon.' With Croker he was very friendly and dined with him several times, both at the Admiralty and at his private residence, Munster House, which stood at the Walham Green end of the Fulham Palace Road. It was Croker, too, who took Scott to Woolwich and, having

conducted him over the Arsenal, accompanied him to a firework display in the evening. Lord Bathurst, whom Scott admired as being one who, although being far from rich, preferred political consistency to a love of office and its emoluments, entertained Sir Walter at his town house in Mansfield Street, though which number he occupied is not known.

The Roxburghe Club, which was founded after the celebrated 'Waterloo of book battles' in 1812, when Boccaccio's 'Decameron' (1471) was put up for auction, elected Scott as one of its members in 1823, but he was first enrolled as the 'Author of Waverley,' and not till 1826, after his public admission of the authorship, does his own name appear in the membership list. His first appearance at the Annual Dinner of the Club was in 1828, during this same visit. These dinners were held at Grillion's hotel, 7, Albemarle Street. The building is still there, though no longer used as a hotel. A little higher up Albemarle Street lived Lord and Lady Leveson-Gower, where Scott, after being delighted one evening with a song sung by Mrs. Arkwright, exclaimed to Lockhart, who was also present, 'Capital—capital words. Whose are they? Byron's, I suppose, but I don't remember them.' Lockhart had to remind Sir Walter that they were his own words—Mrs. Arkwright having sung her own pleasing setting of Cleveland's serenade to Minna Troil from 'The Pirate.'

Several days were occupied during this stay by his giving sittings to sculptors and artists. Chantrey executed his second bust—that in marble, afterwards presented to Sir Robert Peel. Northcote, that 'animated mummy'—to use Scott's own words—who was then eighty years of age, requested a few sittings in his studio, which was in Argyle Street, and which was pulled down recently during the rebuilding of Regent Street. The third studio to which Scott went was Haydon's at 12, Burwood Place, Edgware Road. At this house, which stands to-day, Scott met Charles Lamb, but Haydon, although he records the event in his 'Autobiography,' gives no particulars of the conversation between the 'Author of Waverley' and 'Elia.'

In the entries he made in his 'Journal' during this long visit is to be found the only record of Scott attending divine service in London or of going into any of the Inns of Court. He breakfasted one morning with Dr. Maltby, who was the preacher at Lincoln's Inn, and he afterwards went to the service in the Chapel, which he thought to be a very handsome place of worship, though



he was astonished to find that to gain admission to the Chapel, which is built above a crypt, he had, as he himself puts it, to 'go upstairs.' He was, too, not a little surprised to discover that so learned a Society, producing so many men of talent, had only one monument in their Chapel—that to Spencer Perceval, the murdered Prime Minister.

Before returning to Scotland, Scott drove to Messrs. Lee and Kennedy's famous nurseries, which occupied the ground where the Olympia now stands, and ordered some young pines to be sent to Abbotsford. It is interesting to know that, while many of the oaks planted by Scott at Abbotsford were grown from acorns gathered for him by George Ellis in Windsor Forest, some of the other trees had a London origin.

Throughout the whole of his stay in London on this occasion Sir Walter seldom allowed his pen to remain idle; his absence from Abbotsford did not cause a break in the noble and stoical effort he was making to pay off the Ballantyne creditors; daily since 1826 he had 'wrought at his task,' though at times suffering the most agonising pain, and here let it be noted that the only creditors who gave Scott any trouble, by failing to realise the great sacrifice he was making, were Messrs. Abud and Company, a firm of London merchants. Not until he was engaged in writing 'Count Robert of Paris,' three years after the journey to London that has just been chronicled, did Scott realise that the strain of daily 'pumping' his brains was becoming too heavy for him. Eventually, after a paralytic attack early in 1831, though reluctant to leave Abbotsford, he consented to try if a Continental tour would restore his health, and to accept the Government's offer to place a frigate—H.M.S. *Barham*—at his disposal to take him to the Mediterranean.

Accordingly he set out, in September 1831, on his thirteenth journey to London. The Walter Scott who arrived in town on this occasion was a very different Walter Scott from him who had come before. It was Scott, not as he appears in the noble portraits of Raeburn and Lawrence, but as he is shown to us by Landseer, the original of which is in the National Portrait Gallery. He himself knew that he was setting and 'like a day that has been admired as a fine one, the light of it sets down amid mists and storms.'

He stayed with the Lockharts at Sussex Place till the preparations for his voyage were completed, but was seldom able to leave the house. No longer could he attend the breakfasts of Rogers,

or dine with Sotheby ; no longer was he able to visit the drawing-room of Mr. John Murray. 'Sad memory brought the light of other days around him,' when he recalled the friends whom he had known so well and whose faces he would never see again, and in whose footsteps to the grave he knew he was following so fast. In his 'Journal' he quotes Moore's familiar lines :—

' I feel like one  
Who treads alone  
Some banquet hall deserted  
Whose lights are fled  
Whose garlands dead  
And all but he departed.'

But not quite all 'the old familiar faces' were gone, and his old friend Mrs. Hughes, whose husband was a Canon of St. Paul's and whose son afterwards wrote 'Tom Brown's Schooldays,' did much to comfort him.

Sir Walter first met Mrs. Hughes in 1806 during his fourth visit to London, and the story of their introduction is not without interest. Mrs. Hughes was accustomed at that time to call two or three times a week upon her friend Mrs. Hayman, who lived in Berkeley Square. The house has been pulled down, but the Hay Hill Mews, which stood at the back of it, can still be seen to-day. As she passed by the entrance to these mews Mrs. Hughes always found a half-starved dog on the look-out for her. This lean and hungry creature had been noticed by the kind-hearted lady and she never forgot to carry in her muff a parcel of bones for him. Mrs. Hayman, whose one great fault was a dislike of dogs, always used to complain of what she called her friend's 'folly and greasyness.' One morning Mrs. Hughes, paying her usual visit, found her hostess entertaining Sir Walter. As soon as she entered the room Mrs. Hayman inquired if she 'had been pampering the nasty, mangy cur,' and on receiving an answer in the affirmative she turned to Scott and said, 'I don't know if you will thank me for introducing you to Mrs. Hughes, but I must tell you that she comes here twice or thrice a week, bringing with her a parcel of dirty bones, with which she fills her nice new muff, for a nasty, half-starved cur and feeds the creature with them.' Sir Walter, so Mrs. Hughes has recorded, made no reply for a minute or two, but leaned back in his chair, gazing hard at her from under his shaggy eyebrows, but with a most benevolent smile—then rising suddenly from his chair, he went towards her with outstretched

arms and, grasping her hand and gripping it as though with a vice, exclaimed 'You and I simply *must* be friends.'

As Scott was driving with Mrs. Hughes one day down Fleet Street bound for 3, Amen Court, which was then, as it is to-day, the residence of the Canons, they passed the print shop of Mr. Tilt. Some time before, Scott had received from the print-seller an engraving representing the ancient Manor House of Woodstock, and Mr. Tilt was so proud of the letter of thanks which Scott had sent him that he had it lithographed and distributed among his customers. Mr. Tilt's shop was situated at 86, Fleet Street, just in front of St. Bride's Church. Sir Walter, when he learned from Mrs. Hughes that they were passing the shop, caused the carriage to stop and requested her to bring out the print-seller to speak to him. Five minutes' conversation then took place at the carriage door, during which Sir Walter personally expressed his thanks to the astonished but delighted Mr. Tilt. One of Scott's most striking characteristics, his kind consideration for the feelings of others—he spoke to all his servants, as one of them once remarked, as though they were his blood relations—still found expression in his thoughts and actions, though he himself was suffering so much both in mind and body. Mrs. Hughes tells another pleasing anecdote in her volume of 'Letters and Recollections of Sir Walter Scott.' One day Scott ate some bloaters at her house and enjoyed them so much that Mrs. Lockhart asked her to arrange to have some sent to Sussex Place. Accordingly Mrs. Hughes went to Billingsgate, but the fishmonger there said he could not send so far west, whereupon she expressed her regret as they were intended for Sir Walter Scott. 'Sir Walter Scott, did you say, madam?' cried the rough fishmonger; 'Sir Walter Scott—God bless my soul!—he shall have them directly if I carry them myself—Sir Walter Scott! They shall be with him to-night—no, not to-night, for to-morrow at seven o'clock a fresh cargo comes in, and he shall have *them* for his breakfast.' Happy the novelist whose name, being mentioned in Billingsgate, excites such enthusiasm and honesty! It is stories such as these that help us to realise the magic of Scott's name, and to understand how, before he embarked at Portsmouth on H.M.S. *Barham* for Naples, Wordsworth could write that:

'The might  
Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes;  
Blessings and prayers in nobler retinue  
Than sceptred king or laurelled conqueror knows  
Follow this wondrous Potentate.'

Scott was but little benefited by his continental tour, and almost as soon as he reached Italy his one idea seemed to be to return to his beloved Abbotsford. His rapid overland journey home—a journey quickened by the news of the death of Goethe—was accelerated still more after another seizure on the Rhine at Nimeguen. He returned to England after an absence of nine months, and on re-entering London a halt was made, in the race with death, at the St. James's hotel in Jermyn Street, on the site of which is found to-day a palatial Turkish Bath establishment. There, in his last resting place in London, Sir Walter lay in a state of stupor for three weeks. Inquiries were constantly being made for news of his health by all sorts and conditions of men and women. Allan Cunningham has recorded that, leaving the hotel late one night, he passed, at the end of Jermyn Street, a little company of working men, one of whom asked him, as though there were but one death-bed in the whole of London, 'Do you know, sir, if this is the street in which he is lying?'

Finally, his craving to smell once more the heather of his native land, to catch a final glimpse of the towers of Abbotsford, to caress for the last time his faithful dogs, caused steps to be taken to move his death-bed to Abbotsford, and so on July 7, 1832—fifty-seven years after his first visit—he left London that he might die at home.

While Scott rests in Dryburgh Abbey, with Lady Scott and his elder son beside him, and with Lockhart at his feet, his two daughters and his little grandson, John Hugh Lockhart, lie buried in London soil at Kensal Green. Although Sir Walter had so many associations with London, both as an author and as a man, yet Londoners have never erected any statue to his memory beyond the copy of the Chantry bust which was placed in the Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, in 1897. It was, however, by a fund raised in England, to which Londoners were the chief contributors, that Abbotsford and his library were freed from debt and became the property of his heirs for ever. But London, after all, need raise no monument to preserve the memory of Scotland's most illustrious son. By his greatness and his goodness he has left to all of us an imperishable name 'to earn the vast renown a whole world can give.'

H. G. L. KING.

### LITERARY ACROSTICS.

THE ninth series of Literary Acrostics begins with No. 33, printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of at least £3 will be awarded to the most successful solvers. There will also be consolation prizes, two or more in number: the winners of these will be entitled to choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue. And, further, every month a similar prize of books will be awarded to the sender of the correct solution that is first opened.

#### DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 33.

##### *(The First of the Series.)*

'O, Woman! in our hours of ease,  
Uncertain, coy, and . . . . .  
And variable as the shade  
By the light quivering aspen made.'

1. 'Love took up the —— of Life, and smote on  
all the chords with might.'
2. 'Where the bee sucks, there suck I:  
In a cowslip's bell I lie.'
3. 'While stands the Coliseum, —— shall stand:  
When falls the Coliseum, —— shall fall:  
And when —— falls —— the World.'
4. 'Sure, there's some wonder in this handkerchief;  
I am most unhappy in the loss of it.'
5. 'The Fathers of the City,  
They sat all night and day,  
For every hour some horseman came  
With —— of dismay.'
6. 'All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths ——.'

## RULES.

1. Only one answer may be sent to each light.
2. Every correct light and upright will score one point.
3. With his answer every solver must send the coupon that is printed above 'Book Notes' on a later page.
4. At the foot of his answer every solver must write his pseudonym (consisting of one word), and nothing else. His name and address should be written at the back.
5. Solvers must on no account write either the quotations or the references on the same paper as their answers. It is not necessary, or even desirable, to send them at all.
6. Solvers who write a second letter, to correct a previous answer, must send the complete solution as they wish it, and not merely state the desired alteration.
7. Answers to Acrostic No. 33 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE, 50A Albemarle Street, London, W. 1, and must arrive not later than November 20.

POEM : Hood, *Faithless Nelly Gray*.

## LIGHTS :

- |                   |         |   |  |
|-------------------|---------|---|--|
| ANSWER TO NO. 32. |         |   | 1. Pope, <i>Essay on Man</i> , Epistle 4.                      |
| 1. B              | aco     | N | 2. Landor, <i>Imaginary Conversations</i> .                    |
| 2. E              | ndur    | E | <i>Johnson and Tooke</i> , No. 2.                              |
| 3. N              | ourmaha | L | 3. Moore, <i>Lalla Rookh</i> . <i>The Light of the Haram</i> . |
| 4. B              | razi    | L | 4. Donne, <i>To the Countess of Bedford</i> .                  |
| 5. A              | llo     | Y | 5. Dickens, <i>David Copperfield</i> , ch. 62.                 |
| 6. T              | riffin  | G | 6. W. Watson, <i>An Epistle</i> .                              |
| 7. T              | ravelle | R | 7. Thoreau, <i>Walden</i> . <i>Higher Laws</i> .               |
| 8. L              | obab    | A | 8. Southey, <i>Thalaba the Destroyer</i> , book 4.             |
| 9. E              | nglishr | Y | 9. Kipling, <i>The Reeds of Runnymede</i> .                    |

Acrostic No. 31 ('Hamlet Wolsey') proved to be of more than average difficulty. Only 16 correct answers were received, and there were 108 incorrect; besides these, there were 5 that lacked coupon or pseudonym, or otherwise infringed the rules. The third, fourth, and fifth lights were the chief stumbling-blocks, 'Muriel,' 'Ladies,' and 'Estimate' being very popular shots.

The monthly prize is won by 'Bimbo,' whose answer was the first correct one opened. Miss M. Polglase, Rugen, Alexandra Road, Penzance, is entitled to books to the value of £1, to be chosen from Mr. Murray's catalogue.

Competitors are requested not to send pins, clips, or other paper-fasteners; their coupons do not require to be affixed in any way. A half-sheet of notepaper is best for answers; flimsy paper and big sheets are both undesirable.



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